

Mushtaque B Barq

Translated by

Dr. Sohan Kaul

A Novel

The Psychiatric Ward



The
Psychiatric
Ward

A novel

by
Dr. Susan Kurl

Foreword by
Michael Ondaatje



Knopf
NEW YORK

*The
Psychiatric
Ward*

A Novel

Dr. Sohan Kaul

Translated by

Mushtaque B Barq



AUTHORS P R E S S

*Dedicated to
Aayush and Mehak*

Worldwide Circulation through Authorpress Global Network
First Published in 2022

by

Authorpress

Q-2A Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi-110 016 (India)

Phone: (0) 9818049852

E-mail: authorpressgroup@gmail.com

Website: www.authorpressbooks.com

The Psychiatric Ward

(A Novel)

ISBN 978-93-5529-367-1

Copyright © 2022 Dr. Sohan Kaul

Translated by Mushaque B Barq

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author.

Printed in India at Thomson Press (India) Limited

After the intersection of Kathi Darwaza, when his gawk netted the sign board of the asylum, he stopped and stepped in to recount every word on the board, 'Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences Kashmir.'

He had read the words repeatedly, but his unpremeditated look had never booked his notice. As a result, he was unfamiliar with the board. As he glanced at the board, he felt as if he had brought something to his knees so as to get hold of the preferred fate. Although friends suggested a different placement due to the hospital's history of caring for dangerously insane patients. But he was aware of the fact that once a meaningful relationship is satisfactorily established between the patient and the doctor, it ends in pleasant companionship. During his studies, Dr. Naveed had visited this hospital many times and completed his internship from this institute but today the hospital appeared to him to be slightly different. Perhaps now the hospital is meaningfully connected to his bread and butter. After crossing the main gate of the hospital, he immediately arrived at the private cabin of Dr. Mushtaq. Dr. Mushtaq was not only an eminent psychiatrist but was also humane to the extent of being accustomed to the human predicaments. He was a notable figure in civil society and headed the hospital and was the teacher of Dr. Naveed as well. As a result, it was obligatory for him to pay his respect to his teacher in the first instant. After a gentle knock, Dr. Naveed carefully pushed the door open. Dr. Mushtaq was attending a patient but he signalled Dr. Naveed to take the weight off his feet. He promptly obeyed the visible signal and sat at ease on a sofa to watch the doctor and listen to his patients. The patient was a 60-year-old woman surrounded by her two

young sons. Dr. Mushtaq comfortably listened to them and occasionally monitored the elderly lady. After he listened attentively to all they had to state, he abstemiously smiled, which was typically marked by Dr. Naveed only. He took his pen and inscribed: Admit her to the psychiatric ward.

From today onwards, this beloved mother would be Dr. Naveed's patient. After that, the bell brought in the peon. "Do send Saima Ji here and also serve us tea. Just a possible minute more, Doctor, and I will be free." "Sir, please relax and take your time." This was an appealing gesture of obedience by Dr. Naveed, but Dr. Mushtaq studiously kept monitoring the old woman. "Dear mother, from today you will stay here." "Why so Doctor?" she asked innocuously.

"In point of fact, you frequently visit this place, and owing to the approaching winter, it will be challenging for you to make constant visits."

"No, winter can't bother me; I shall be making regular visits, but my survival outside my home is unthinkable. When my innocent children are asleep, and my husband returns home at night, he will be annoyed by taking notice of motherless children. No, no, I can't stay here."

"It is a matter of a few days."

"They won't attend the school; they will wander around. I know it."

Dr. Naveed was taken aback by how these mature sons would do at school. Being a doctor, he sensed the elderly woman's problem and, in the meantime, the door opened. The reflection through the door was sharp enough to recognise the incoming person. When the door was shut, only then came a charming nurse into view who was standing at the door.

"Sir."

"Dear Saima, please escort this mother and admit her to the psychiatric ward. Bed number 8 should be allotted to her."

"All right Sir."

"By the way, meet Dr. Naveed. He is your new doctor. He has joined only today."

"Greetings"

"Greetings to you as well!" he responded. He was pleased to know that decency still prevailed around him.

"Doctor, leave me alone, and don't hold my hand, I can't stay here. My children will be off beam."

"Mother, your sons will also stay here with you and just after a few days, you will be fine and move back with them."

"What is wrong with me to be cured? Doctor, why don't you inform them?"

"Mother, you only have to stay here for a few days for proper monitoring."

She was won over, and Saima escorted her to the ward.

After the door was shut, Dr. Mushtaq kept gazing thoughtfully at the door and then finally addressed the sons of an old woman's sons.

"At your earnest request, I sinned. I know the preferential treatment at this hospital cannot do wonders, but minding your trouble, I have admitted her, but now do pay frequent visits to the hospital so that she may feel as if she has been treated at home."

"It is fine, Doctor," one of the sons said, standing up, "we would never have asked for the favour, but her dead end of time

The autumn season was in full swing; the chill was about to break the confines and a gush of air was busy detaching leaves to end their relationship with the parent limb. Heaps of fallen leaves were seen on the roads and lawns. The crimson Chinese leaves had occupied the entire locale. The columns of smoke rising from the heaps of burning Chinara leaves in the atmosphere were creeping into the recesses of the heart of Kashmir to register its possible arrival. The autumn season is astounding in texture for the reason that it signals the termination of one relationship and the beginning of the other. On the other hand,

future.

his heart, he professed the fabulous dawn of his impending experience, which he shared during the tea, and in the depths of enjoyed it. Dr. Naveed kept listening to Dr. Mushatq's sitting in his father's lap. After that, tea was served, and both beside Dr. Naveed and embraced him as if a minor child was

When they left, Dr. Mushatq stood up and took a seat

"It is my responsibility now. Don't worry."

"Please take due care of our mother."

to Dr. Mushatq, and then turned to Dr. Naveed and requested,

"Thanks a lot, Doctor," they both expressed their gratitude

onwards."

because Dr. Naveed is going to take care of her from now

Anyway, you can relax now and with it, my worry too is over,

it is her stunning mind, in which time has come to a standstill.

"She is not to be blamed for it. If anything is to be blamed,

backpacks. What ordeal can we reveal to you, Doctor?"

the morning to attend the classes and asks us to wake up early in

and disturbs the entire locality. She forces us to wake up early in

to attend the school, and if we deny it, she screams hysterically

has caused us many problems." Throughout the night, she

"Why this Iron Gate and security, Saima?" He asked.

end of the ward.

As Dr. Naveed looked around, he found two security guards at the Iron Gate and could see the ladies at the extreme

"This is the ladies ward," she pointed out.

and smiled. She guided him to the ward.

As he was about to enter the ward, she adjusted her headgear

psychiatric ward. Outside the ward, Saima was waiting for him.

Dr. Naveed came out of the room and reached for the gate of

that we can. After an extended conversation with Dr. Mushatq,

We have to carry on beyond Kutray Darwaza and the kingdom

have to be taken into account. Nonetheless, our story is different.

Kathi Darwaza and the traditional stories connected to the rule

intersected. The kingdom of Kutray from the other side of the

travel around Kashmir, the Kathi Darwaza ought to be

an integral part of our existence. If at all in the future, one has to

patients. But with the passage of time, the hospital turned into

might have been constructed for a few mentally challenged

would reside in our history as a significant chapter. This hospital

been a far-fetched imagination to recount that this hospital

the foundation stone of this hospital was set forth, it might have

obviously, the exclusive part of the castle was awkward. When

scattered all over. It was like an unexpected verdict, and

with tussled and tasselled subways and relationships were

patience well-marked in them. It was the place where interwoven

every word in there narrated the tale of woes with pain and

fighting a war against their mentally challenged patients were

"Sir, because these patients can turn violent at any time."

Dr. Naveed only smiled in response and said, "We have failed to understand them, Saima." They are among us, like our sisters and mothers."

"This sounds good, but their behaviour is changeable, and one never knows when they will do what is unexpected of them."

"Let the door be opened, I want to meet them all, to analyse their case study and to learn about their behaviour."

"Doctor, you are too tired today and it is your first day. Let me escort you to your room."

"No, Saima, these patients have already forgotten their association with their relatives and are always looking ahead to establishing a new relationship and that they are trying to see a doctor as their longtime associate. I want to meet them first and then go back into the room."

Saima ordered the security men to open the gate. As the sound of the metal reached the ears of the patients, their eyes were stationed at the gate. A few looked ferocious, a few like withered leaves, a few only waiting for some unknown moment. When Dr. Naveed entered the ward, he was shocked to see the number of patients in it.

"Such a huge number of patients, it seems that the entire Kashmir is admitted in this ward."

"The entire Kashmir is like it."

"Unfortunately this nation whose sisters and mothers are locked inside the gate waiting for their termination."

"No one thinks like this doctor!"

The Psychiatric Ward • 13

"Of course, they too think..." As Saima sensed Dr. Farah standing next to Dr. Naveed, she cut it short.

"What is the doctor asking for?"

"There is no need to ask them, I am Dr. Farah, and am in charge of this ward."

The sweet voice stopped Dr. Naveed. He turned back and witnessed a gorgeous lady wearing a pair of costly goggles adorned with loosely arranged silky hair, a prototype of exquisiteness.

"Welcome, Dr. Naveed; by the way, you should have sought permission from me before entering this ward. Nonetheless, it is good to know you are concerned about the patients. Please carry on." After saying this, Dr. Farah left. Dr. Naveed and Saima kept looking at each other. Both are attending to the patients and reading their case histories. Saima is sharing the necessary facts about each and every patient with Dr. Naveed, and during the rounds in the ward, they stopped at bed number 8 and found her file all blank for the reason of her being a fresh admission. She is the same mother who was already counselled by Dr. Naveed.

"Doctor, have my children returned from their school?"

"Mother, they have not arrived yet; otherwise, they should have attended to you."

Saima kept asking, and Dr. Naveed tried to respond to her by informing her that he had not till date read about such a case in medical science, and that Dr. Mughniyah had been doing research on this case and that he may have to visit America to present his paper. Dr. Naveed continued his round and kept scrutinising the faces of the patients and their files.

"How often electric shocks to these patients?"

"Yes sir, Dr. Farah has recommended the same treatment almost to all."

"Every patient doesn't need the same treatment, Saima."

"Then why this electric shock?"

"Inclusiveness has to be put to use. Shock treatment is acceptable but not suitable for all."

Meanwhile, Doctor Naveed attends bed number 10, where a young girl has thrown herself down, but is seriously watching them both. As the doctor approached her, she all of a sudden stood up and, with folded hands, asked for mercy.

"Please don't torment me any longer. It's not a good idea. It's excruciatingly painful. Please don't rip my dress; I'll undo it on my own. I just put it on a few days ago. I beg you, I'll take off my clothes. See, the old scars haven't healed yet. As you can see, the old wounds are still congested. I'll submit my will, but please don't use force. "This is my shirt, take it..."

Saying that she exposed herself and stood naked on the bed.

"Oh my God, Saima, please wrap her."

"Doctor, please leave."

In this chaotic state, when Dr. Naveed leaves the ward, he finds Dr. Farah waiting for him. She holds his hand and takes him along. Saima was seen clothing the young woman. The Iron Gate is again shut and the security men resume their duty.

For the first time, Dr. Naveed was already sweating and, for the first time, he had encountered life for the first time. He felt that underneath the fort of Hari Parbat there were numerous and a valley of questions irritated him, for he was

near such a holy gate. By the way, he sits in the room with Dr. Farah, and she too adjusts her chair beside him.

"Doctor, you should not have taken a risk on that too on the very first day." You should have consulted your seniors. "I think the careless nurse should have informed you about their aggressive behaviour beforehand."

"No, she is not to be blamed. I insisted. I am sorry." "Don't feel sorry, actually that girl is undergoing ECT." "Electroconvulsive therapy! How many shocks has she received?"

"To be precise, four"

"Oh, no! She will die due to shocks. Her mind will be dead. She is a young girl. Medicines should have been tried first."

"Do you still recommend medicine after observing her state of the ailment?" "Not only medicine but inclusiveness and emotional empathy."

"Doctor, come on, these are bookish suggestions and are repeatedly mentioned in research papers, and all that doesn't suit these wards. In these wards, actuality is unclothed pitilessly. She has been ravished, a miserable gang rape. She has been irretrievably ruined."

"We moreover have, like them ruined her. They have severely tortured her body and we have deteriorated her disordered mind, there is hardly any difference between us." Dr. Naveed fled the room, and Dr. Farah kept brooding, wondering if all that Dr. Naveed revealed was true or the ECT treatment, which medical science recommends for such violent patients.

There was a profound calm in the ward now. Dinner was already served, and everyone was waiting eagerly for peaceful

mother had placed her plate in front of her and was gazing at her. All had taken their dinners, save her. The tick-tock of the wall clock was only heard in the ward, and in the dead silence, the tick-tock was noticeable. It was beyond imagination to think of what the need for the wall clock was in the mentally retarded ward, wherein, one way or another, time had stopped for them. In any case, the person who installed the wall clock may have imagined that one day the wall clock would be able to mobilize their mental frozen time. But whatever was inside was concealed, but outside the darkness was dense and the barking of dogs was apparent.

Hasn't anyone seen my children? Have they attended their classes? God knows. I have been imprisoned. God knows what the conditions at my home are, and my husband might have arrived. "She asks so many such questions, but the security guards hardly respond, as if they were pillars of stone in front of her, devoid of all senses and emotions. Hopelessness returned the mother to her bed, where her neighbouring patient suggested,

"Try to sleep. Why don't you sleep? Don't be so impatient. I too have been waiting for my husband for many days."

The mother calmly responded, and in the meantime, the dog's barking intensified, and she rushed to the door of the ward where her two sons are seen with a lunchbox.

"Let my life lay down its arms. Have you returned? Come in. Why are you so late? Has your father returned too?"

"No, mother, he has not returned yet. You please take this box and eat it."

"Cooked rice, who prepared it?"

"We know how to cook?"

"Please pardon me, but let me convey that the doctor is next to God. I don't have the guts to disapprove your suggestion, but

The father of the patient took a long pause, and Dr. Naved was waiting for his response, but before the words would come to occupy his lips, his cascading eyes had the answer well in place. Dr. Naved stood up and consoled him.

"You too," Dr. Naved was attending to a patient and it was suggested that he be admitted despite objections by his father. Dr. Naved asks, "Don't you want him to recover?"

It was overcast, and from dawn, it occasionally rained. Dr. Naved and Dr. Farah were busy attending patients at the OPD when Dr. Farah suddenly glanced through the window and the snow added an appalling look to her face. She turned to Dr. Naved and greeted him, saying, "Let you welcome the first snowfall."

The autumn season passed and winter took over. The Chhila Kalan started to illustrate its severity. It was overcast, and from dawn, it was occasionally raining, but at noon, the snowfall took over.

The mother occupies a corner of the ward and takes the dinner briskly, perhaps she had not eaten anything throughout the day. And in the meantime, the night of autumn moves on to its destined spot.

The guard opens the Iron Gate and hands over the tiffin box to her.

"All right, you can go, but do not roam outside; the dogs are on the prowl."

"No, mother, please continue, we are in the next room."

"Oh my God! Do come in. How innocently have you cooked?"

The Psychiatric Ward • 17

his sister is going to get married within days. If her in-laws come to know about his ailment, they may cancel the marriage. Otherwise, I had no objection to your suggestion."

"Oh, no! Don't worry, I will prescribe some medicine for him, but why should they cancel the marriage?"

"There are countless people lying in homes who have almost lost their mental balance, but their family members do not shift them to hospitals for the reason that they might be accused for nursing their mentally challenged sons and fathers. Doctor, this society belongs to hollow men."

"Take this prescription; I've suggested some medications. To avoid any klutziiness, he must be escorted and never be left alone."

Dr. Naveed taps the head of his patient and looks through the window. The clouds of heaven were mercilessly deteriorating the conditions outside. Saima, too, at the window, has been enjoying in the snowfall. The footfall of the patients has already thinned. Dr. Naveed stood beside Saima at the window, enjoying the heavy snowfall.

"Doctor, see how within no time the entire earth changes its colour."

"Unquestionably, Saima, only one colour, white, my favourite, no plurality, only oneness."

"Doctor, do you write as well?"

"No, save medical papers that are published in foreign magazines."

...der in your room."

"I'll submit my leave for those days as well."

"But why?"

"I am too tired to attend to patients of the same nature. I sense I may fall ill."

"I believe Kashmir as a whole is in a state of medical dysfunction. What will happen to such a large number of patients if everyone involved in their care believes the same way you do?" Meanwhile, Dr. Farah entered into the room and stood behind them.

"Roads have been clogged by a heavy snowfall." I'm going to take a break before the roads become impassable, and please phone me if there's an emergency." Dr. Farah says as she walks away with her handbag.

"It'll be all right." Dr. Farah leaves as Dr. Naveed approaches. Doctor Naveed and Saima entered the room again. He begins reading the patient case history while Saima prepares coffee. Coffee's aroma infuses the area with a pleasant sensation. Outside, the snow had severed the silence, but within, a distinct pulsing was on. She took a corner seat to savour the last sips of coffee after serving the doctor. Saima was staring at Dr. Naveed all the time, and if he raises his head, she lowers her gaze.

"Doctor, I have to inform you," she said, and Dr. Naveed didn't even raise his head.

"What's more, if you want to go, you can, but it's snowing fiercely right now, and that could make things worse."

Dr. Naveed's statement makes her upset, but she says, "Doctor, I am not leaving."

"So, what's next?"

"Have you reached your destiny?" Dr. Naveed inquired as he slowed his speed.

"Yes, kindly stay with us tonight."

"No, I must reach for the reason my mother would be worried about me."

"We will ring them up to inform them that it is difficult to reach Barzulla."

The snowfall had exacerbated the situation, and he knew it would be difficult to reach Barzulla. He parked the car quickly, and they sped through the small lanes to their destination. They both moved in after brushing the snow off their heads.

Everyone, including Saima's father, welcomed Dr. Naveed with open arms. When Saima was introduced Dr. Naveed, her father stated emphatically that his quest was over. He thought God had provided him with a charming and vivacious son-in-law. A fresh night suit, a warmer, and a shawl were provided to Dr. Naveed. He took Kangri² and began conversing with Saima's father. There were a few rounds of Kashmiri tea provided. They talked about the hospital in detail, including the growing number of patients who have yet to be treated there due to social taboos.

"To put it plainly, doctor, Kashmir has been harmed by someone."

"I don't believe in it, but we've been plagued with a never-ending curse since 1947 that has resulted in widespread mental illness."

"You are correct. We need to figure out how to find the proper way. By the way, I'm sure you're hungry. Come on, Saima, get your meal started. It's too late already."

"I don't feel like eating. Not if it is my last meal."

"Who is this Shazia?" asks the doctor.

"The case history you're now studying is the same Shazia."

"What? How do you know?" he asked, raising his head.

"I work as a nurse. I'm aware of everything that occurs in the ward. I look into their heads as well as their bodies."

"How long have you been aware?"

"It was about ten to twelve days ago."

"Under such circumstances, she will be unable to carry the fetus." Dr. Naveed was so lost in the vacancy that he forgot about his coffee and became completely absorbed in her case history.

"There was no such confirmation at the time of her medical check."

"No," she said as she rose to wash her cup and approached Dr. Naveed.

"It's not a huge deal; we need to get an abortion," she said. He was obliged to raise his head and say, "Abortion. Is it you that proposed this procedure?" He appeared to have lost his ability to speak after that. He closed the file and leaned against the chair for a long time.

"No way! Saima, it's too late. Let's get going, and I'll drop you off at the nearest post."

They both left in the midst of a snowstorm. Their footprints were visible as they walked through the sheet of snow. The car continued to proceed through the snowstorm, skidding and stopping at times, but Dr. Naveed eventually arrived in Rainawari, where Saima was staying.

Apart from her parents, Saima had a younger brother who was studying engineering in Bangalore and was in his final year of studies. Aijaz Ahmad, Saima's father, worked for the Food and Supplies Department before retiring in June of this year. He only had one regret after completing his term: his son and daughter were still unmarried.

On the other hand, Mr. Aijaz had entrusted all his problems to God, and he was convinced that he would receive his just reward from Him. He was always urging his wife to be trusting. Mr. Aijaz was confident today that God has the best in store for him. Nonetheless, when Dr. Naveed had completed his meal, Saima accompanied him to the adjacent room, where his bed had been set up. Dr. Naveed slid into the bed, and Saima adjusted his bed clothing as if he were a child.

"Does the bed seem a little warm?"

"The water bottle is indeed excessively hot."

"The most serious problem in Kashmir is a lack of electricity. When it rains or snows in Kashmir, the electricity and takes the brunt of the damage."

"The lines are not strong enough to withstand the weight of snow, and trees also fall on the cables."

"Would you mind taking a break?"

"Thank you so much, Saima. I'd have ended up trapped in some place."

"Would you like to tell your parents by calling?"

"Yes."

"During our talk with Abu Ji, the time flew by unnoticed."

"Abu Ji is a fascinating individual. Religion, politics, and literature are all areas in which he excels."

The snowfall had ended; it had melted and given way to the spring season. New grass had sprouted. The tree limbs were filled with buds. It was tough to imagine how these once snow-covered roads and lawns had taken on a new appearance. The man, too, wishes to see similar improvements in his life, but it appears to be a distant dream. The mental institution had scarcely altered; it looked exactly the same as it had before, with the increase of patients, which had grown rapidly. All patients admitted to the hospital, including physicians, had their time frames frozen. Dr. Naveed had returned from an AIIMS meeting, but Dr. Mushtraq had not yet arrived. He had high hopes for this international conference since he had to present a study paper 'The Frozen Time' that the medical community

and there was a strange quiet all around. away after turning out the inverter bulb. The snow fell gradually, removed the cushion and assisted him into bed. She walked their hands. "When he fell asleep after the last sentence, Saima is the definition of generosity." Saima, the true treatment is in expertise and experience on their prescription sheets, but a nurse

"Doctors are irrelevant to me because they write down their

"How do you feel about doctors?" she inquired. you treat them a trait that just a few individuals possess?"

"Never, ever underestimate yourself, Saima. God has blessed you with a variety of talents, which explains why you have been able to handle such a difficult profession by working with patients who are separated from their families. Isn't the way

"The reason for this is my own ineptness. I don't believe I'm

"Reason?"

"I'm very sure I've learned nothing in my life."

stopped for the entire Kashmir area in one manner or another. Dr. Naveed was seriously looking at his ward as he attempted to uncover the truth that lay behind these lovely brains. He was making changes to their case files. Whenever he went to see their relatives, he would spend hours with them attempting to figure out what was wrong with them. On the computer, he had already transferred all the data. It was the summer season. The almond blossom was at its peak and had reached the mental hospital's gate, as well as the entire neighbourhood, but it had come to a complete halt right at the gate for some unexplained reason. The flowers were everywhere, yet the stifled fragrance of autumn trees lingered within the building.

Salma progressively approached Dr. Naveed, and she had already married him in her heart. She considered him to be her spouse. Dr. Farah, on the other hand, had feelings for Naveed, but her ego had kept her from expressing them for the reason that she was the daughter of a reputed IAS officer, who during his tenure had reached out to the Chief Secretary, who was involved in taking certain important decisions about the proceedings in Kashmir. In any case, everything will fall into place at the appropriate moment. Dr. Naveed is currently out central figure, and you should pay attention to him. Salma was already waiting for him, as was customary. She enjoyed the smile on her lips as he went by and took a few steps towards him.

"I'm not sure why I usually wait for you at the ward's entrance like a patient."

"There must be a reason indeed,"

"Perhaps, but it has yet to come to my lips."

"If at all I know, can I share?"

Certainly.

Who is this?

"Who is this?" Dr. Naveed noticed a woman standing against the wall, clutching a bag.

clutching a bag.

"She has been anticipating your arrival since the morning. I have been chastising her, but she refused to listen."

"I suppose she's a relative of Shazia."

"But who is she?"

"She was gazing at her through the door."

...yO...

Dr. Naveed approaches her cautiously and turns her to face him. Naveed and I want to introduce myself to you,

• 1999

"I'm Dr. Naved, and I want to introduce myself to you, Mother. Why were you seeking me in the first place?"

She was flung down with a scream as a result of this. Dr. Naveed took her in his arms and led her to his room. Saima collects her bag and follows. Dr. Naveed offers her a seat and a glass of water. She regains her consciousness, but her eyes continue to cascade. Saima stands beside her with a bag in her hand. By appearance, it seems that she belongs to a wealthy family, but she seems worried.

"I came here after a great struggle," she explained.

"But why, please tell me?"

"My dear beloved daughter is here, I have no idea what awful fate has led her to this hospital; I wish she had died and that would have been the only sorrow, but her existence appears to be an ongoing chronicle of suffering."

"Who is your daughter?" asked the doctor.

"My daughter, Shazia," she responded.

"Oh, no! Don't worry, she will be all right, God willing."

"Her rehabilitation is meaningless because she is considered dead by all and sundry."

"Dead? But why is that? How can someone who is alive be labelled 'dead'?"

"We assassinated her. Those beasts murdered her followed by her father and uncles."

"What do you mean?"

"To preserve our faces, we announced her death by suicide."

"Did everyone believe it?"

"They had to since we alienated her."

"But, mother, so much suffering for someone who is not at fault. You have no right to punish her in this way. Are you unaware that she is expecting a child?"

"No way! Certainly not! What calamity has befallen me, doctor? Please recommend any medicine that can kill her."

"Mother, what kind of nonsense are you referring to? I'm a doctor, not a murderer."

"Doctor, her rehab and safety are useless; where should I put her?"

"Her residence, where her parents live."

"How brave should I be to take her?"

"Doctor, who can understand her better than I?" "Who can feel her agony more than I?" "Our society, on the other hand, can't encourage her to live, and death can only bring an end to her suffering. To put an end to her life is a virtue. I will gladly pay on demand."

"Can you tell me about your family's business?"

"Agriculturists are what we are. We dealt with apples, and we handled whatever from that to the hotel industry. We are fortunate because of God's favour. But we only have one concern: how to handle this girl. She has been on bad terms. She was very daring! She was the epitome of beauty and intelligence."

"How did it all happen?"

"She went to the orchard during the apple season and was assaulted by four scallawags."

"It would never happen in our saintly city," Salma remarked, "but this obscenity has invaded this city."

"Who were those?" asked the doctor.

"They were locals, yet God dealt them the punishment they deserved. It was a terrifying experience for everyone in the neighbourhood."

"I appreciate your taking the time to pay a visit to our patient, and we guarantee you that our services will not let you down."

"Doctor, it won't get you anything."

"I have a lot to gain, whether it gives you anything or not; for me, it's a challenge; come, I'll make you meet Shazia."

"They'd all left the room and were heading for the ward. The

opened. Shazia was surrounded by Dr. Naveed, Saima, and her mother. Shazia was embraced by her mother, but she was unable to reply. She remained staring at the doctor, as if terrified, and was about to get up, but the doctor's kind gestures persuaded her to stay there and continue staring at him.

"Oh! I'm your mother, your daughter. Look at me and speak to me. I long to have a heart-to-heart conversation with you."

"Mother, she doesn't recognise you right now. She is now recovering and her behaviour is more subdued; she is no longer the same person she was three months ago."

"Look at my daughter, Shazia. Are we causing you any annoyance? Your dissatisfaction is genuine; we have not paid you a visit."

"Why don't you respond? Who am I to you?" Shazia stared at her strangely.

"I am your mother, your own mother!"

"Mother!" Shazia giggled as she raised her head, her peary white teeth revealing the predicament they had been in. Dr. Naveed was keeping an eye on Shazia to make sure nothing went wrong. Shazia was looking stunning today, and Dr. Naveed was showing her some much-needed compassion because she had categorically rejected all ties to her relatives.

"Are there any mothers in my family? Is there anyone who has ever given birth to me? How is this even possible? I should not have been here if I had been treated like a human being. They'll attack me either now or tomorrow. They're in the next room, waiting for me. They're in the area, do save me from them."

"Dear Son, I'm not sure if I'll revisit her or not in the future," she says, clutching Dr. Naveed's hands and pleading, "but today I realise God exists and lives among the people."

"What exactly do you mean?"

"I'm not sure if she deserves to live or die, but she must never give birth to a child."

"Why?"

"If she wants to live at all, the baby will not let her because the baby will leave an unhealed scar that is difficult to resist and will continue to torture her throughout her life. Please accept her clothing and this bag which has a latch remove it. This morning

Dr. Naveed makes his way back to his room.

Saima and Shazia's mother join in as well.

"Dear Son, I'm not sure if I'll revisit her or not in the future," she says, clutching Dr. Naveed's hands and pleading, "but today I realise God exists and lives among the people."

"What exactly do you mean?"

"I'm not sure if she deserves to live or die, but she must never give birth to a child."

"Why?"

"If she wants to live at all, the baby will not let her because the baby will leave an unhealed scar that is difficult to resist and will continue to torture her throughout her life. Please accept her clothing and this bag which has a latch remove it. This morning

"Doctor, I believe they are immensely wealthy. So, what are you going to do with this cash?"

"What's the issue here? Keep it as it is till she is freed from the hospital, take these clothes and make her wear them."

"It's all right, I'll keep the money in the locker."

"I'm going to the OPD, and you shall go ward."

"All right, doctor," I say.

"Salma, pay attention to the changes across the ward."

"What kind of change are you talking about?"

"A peculiar silence settles over the room as everyone senses Shazia's grief. Today, her mother was also deafeningly quiet. Today, she didn't even to ask for her children."

"Maybe she won't ask for it again."

"But why is that the case?"

"Since the day received the shock, she hasn't recognised including her children."

"What Who prescribed it?"

"Doctor Farah".

"Oh! She's enraged, she lacks medical ethics, and she's harmed the mental health of yet another individual. Thanks to her, another phase has come to an end. Who gave her the right to practise medicine? I'm not sure how I'm going to persuade Dr. Mustaq to reconsider. I don't know what to say. He urged us not to use shock treatment on the old woman before he departed. He was conducting an extensive study into her psyche in order to establish a new universe. It was evident that his theory was correct. How should I reply if he calls and asks for it? I've been unable to meet my obligations."

"They appear to be well-off."

"She got into her car and drove away; her driver was waiting for her."

He said, "Where has she gone?"

on the table.

Kathi Darwaza. Dr. Naveed was too preoccupied with the items Salma reappears when the car takes a turn and goes past the

"Don't worry, I'll look after her."

Please look after her properly."

embraces her with all her might. "I'm going to take a break seat at the main gate. Before the car leaves, Salma's mother exits, and the driver unlocks the vehicle door and she takes her fleeting glance towards the Iron Gate. The mother eventually travelling in her own world, while her mother casts another cash on Dr. Naveed's table. Shazia is in a drooping position, Salma leads the mother to the gate, leaving the clothing and questions vanish while the mother departs.

be your mother." Dr. Naveed is caught up in a fix and all of his You don't have to establish any restrictions if you consider me to "There are no conditions attached to Mother's decision. will cover whatever expenses she incurs."

"True, but we don't have access to this money. The hospital "You are my son, and a son owes his mother obedience."

an announcement.

"We have no right to have this money," Dr. Naveed made has no one on whom she can rely."

From now on, you are her sole sister, mother, and friend. She her expenses since, as you know, a woman has a lot of them. is hers, and it has been retrieved from her handbag. Take care of

Saima seems speechless, and Dr. Naveed leaves the room in frustration.

The sun sets in this area of the earth and rises in America, bringing with it new opportunities, particularly in the field of mental health. Today is the beginning of new chapters in mental health, and only Dr. Mushtaq from Kashmir will present the frozen period of Kashmir in the shape of disease at the conference. The New Orleans municipal auditorium was decked out for ICRAMHS's annual celebration (International Conference on Recent Advances in Medical and Health Sciences). This conference was set to attract a large number of well-known and distinguished doctors and health specialists. At the conference, Dr. Mushtaq was representing Kashmir and presenting his research report. Before entering the auditorium, he looked up at the sky. The huge blue sky was clearly visible. It was the same October chill there, and there was a distinct sense of warmth, as well as warmth in the paper. The huge blue sky was clearly visible. It was the same October chill there as well, and the warmth was palpable, as was the warmth in the paper. "My city's residents must be asleep. It may be 11 pm over there, but the patients in my ward, on the other hand, had to remain awake since time had been stopped at a point, as if hanging above them." All sides of the audience erupted in applause. The mood in the hall was hypnotic, as if he were recounting a tale to unveil its hidden wisdom to the audience.

"Everything about my city is great because my city's history is similarly incredible. With the passage of time, numerous chapters have been added to its history that, in turn, impact the thoughts of its residents, and in 1990, a rainstorm-like event disrupted everything, which in turn gave birth to many stories that caused widespread sadness. The sorrow of disappearance became a common narrative; someone lost a husband, a brother or a son, and even a mother or father, a region was lost to

someone and someone lost his nation, and thus everyone lost uniquely."

The crowd erupted in applause as Dr. Mushtaq's words resonated. Every statement was greeted with applause, and he had to pause to respond. Finally, he considered the study report he had written on the mother, hospitalised in his hospital's ward. She was not only his patient, but also a full-fledged research facility. He began by stating the following facts about his case:

Sara was her name. She was a lovely and astute person. She was not well educated because she was a rural girl, and as a result, she married Ama Lala when she was far too young. He was collaborating with a group of forest timber licence. He could ride an outstanding horse, and his youth was the talk of the town. His responsibilities included waking up early to attend to his traders, arranging labourers, and overseeing sawyers. His whip was a sign of power, and anybody who got it left a permanent scar on his skin. He was the traders' first choice; they would blindly trust him. Ama Lala became the father of two children during the course of his life. Everyone at home grew preoccupied. He had a habit of leaving early and reporting late. This habit was linked to two things: the first was how early he would leave his house. Sara always handed him his lunch box and waited till he mounted the horse, then waited until he sped up the horse and disappeared. When she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs at night, she would position herself at the entrance to greet Ama Lala. The pair had a great love relationship and genuinely respected one another. Ama Lala would always report when his children were already in bed, and this practice has continued to this day. The moonlight was strewn everywhere. He was about to feed his horse when he noticed Sara, who was waiting for him with outstretched arms. He was stuck between two moons, one high in the sky and the other at the front door. After feeding his horse, he dashed over to Sara. Sara hugged

him, and they both stepped in to care for their sleeping children. Ama Lala kissed their foreheads before turning to face her.

"These two youngsters are our true property."

"Yes, it's time to enroll them in school."

"With God's help, we will ensure that they receive the greatest education possible." "We're illiterate, but we can't afford for them to be." Sara nodded in agreement, but she also communicated her sorrow, which she was nursing beneath her breast.

"Can you tell me whether you're terrified of this forest since you didn't report it in time?"

"I've only known these woodlands my entire life. These woodlands have cared for me as if they were a foster mother. How can a son be terrified of his mother?"

"Because the situation is getting worse by the day, the army has taken control of everything."

"Army personnel are familiar with me. I always have my identity card with me."

"Please quit this job if you listen to me. The contractors are not from these forests and have nothing to do with them."

"They are given contracts."

"For what, only to rob us of our forests?"

"Leave this debate aside and give me the dinner. I'm becoming hungry."

They both enjoyed their supper, but Sara's query continued to acquire velocity in the air, like an amber developing into a flame. Ama Lala's mansion featured balconies adorned with the finest latticework, through which the moon crept to inhabit the gallery walls, festooning them with its majestic silhouette. The

couple climbed into bed, but sleep was elusive. As they faced one another, they were both staring at the floor.

"Please pay attention to me, Ama Lala."

Ama Lala swiftly pursed his lips together with his palm. "There will be no more squabbles since we are so close that words would find us too far apart."

Sara remained quiet as her breath gathered velocity, allowing Ama Lala to pass through the door of exquisiteness, which had been closed for a long time. Following that, they arrived at the Valley of Ecstasy, which was abundant with incredible perfume and where the sky and surface appeared to be from a fairy tale, devoid of sunshine and impenetrable darkness. It was a lovely ceremony, as if the entire environment had been showered in raindrops to take an inexplicable form that landed them in a frenzy where they lay down satisfactorily in the bevy of fragrance until the sunlight peered through the lattice work to break Sara's sleep and, in turn, she awakened Ama Lala. They would stare at each other, flubbing their eyes, as if they hadn't seen each other for a long time.

"Let's get lost again." The blanket was pointed out by Ama Lala. Sara's modesty drove her away from the sight, and she ended up in the bathroom.

Since it was tumultuous outside, stillness was the preferred blessing to savour within the walls of a secluded chamber.

A robber who had been viciously plundered children of the village was on the loose. A few were spotted fleeing, while others were found dead at their doors. Every house was destroyed as a result of the chaos. Keeping this in mind, everyone prayed for their children to remain in adolescence instead of reaching the prime of life. But time has never been stopped, not by wish lists or curses. The wheel of time would turn, and the children would

be promoted to the following grades, but the thief who had taken much from the community was now aiming at Ama Lala's house.

The village chief would despise the city contractors. He would rather say that these forests belong to their villages and are a source of riches and treasure for them. If the trees were all cut down at the same time, they might face famine. The village chief was keeping an eye on both the labour and the labourers employed by the dealers in these woodlands. He had a significant influence on the entire village. He had run in two Assembly elections and had won one of them. He was still in charge of a number of organisations and provided them with financial assistance on a regular basis.

On July 31, 1931 when a demonstration was initiated against the oppression at Central Jail Srinagar in which 31 people were massacred, his great grandfather was one of the martyrs owing to which his family was considered among the pioneer rebellions. After the end of oppression, Ama Lala was the only oppressor considered by the village head, who had often called on Ama Lala and warned him not to roam in the forest.

"Why are you denying me a living, Haji Sahib? I don't have any land of my own to farm and generate money from." You are free to farm the land, but you will not be permitted to penetrate the forests. Ama Lala was oblivious to the reason why he was being prevented from entering the trees. "How come you're concerned about my walking into the woods?" You must save yourself. As a neighbour, I am sincerely advising you. Let me be clear: you are being monitored and will be killed. You must save yourself. "Who will assassinate me in the village?"

"Why don't you take stock of the situation, anyone? The dynamite is being put in every crevice and corner. It all needs a spark, and everything will burn to ashes. Stop walking into the

woods: you'll find employment. You have the ability to make money. You can make money out of anything."

"It sounds fantastic, but the circumstances are similar." "It hardly makes any difference between earning in the village or in the forest."

"People like you have wreaked havoc on Kashmir. You have a good physical appearance, but you lack intelligence. You should be holding a pistol, but you're content with this whip to tyre this horse."

"What have I got to do with a gun?"

"A gun is an instrument of Jihad, a means of revolution."

"But why is that? Jihad is waged against oppression, and I had no such experience."

"You won't comprehend; your thinking is like a wild pine, which appears lovely but lacks the vitality to be burned."

Ama Lala was rendered speechless. He remained quiet for a while before rising to his feet.

"Please excuse me, let me leave."

"What am I to conclude from this meeting?"

"I'm not sure. I don't want your ideas; the traders rely on me. I can't let them down."

"It's all fine." The village chief departs.

Ama Lala was taken aback by such behaviour, so he mounted his horse and raced into the jungle without further ado. When he arrived, he sensed a difference in the tone. The spring season had arrived, and the thunder and lightning had made the forests perilous. The labourers also left, and the loaded truck was driven into town. Ama Lala assesses the situation for a bit, and just as he was ready to return home, a few young men wielding

guns from behind the woods arrive on the scene and seize his horse. Ama Lala is ordered off the horse's back by one of the lads. As he was getting down, one of the boys battered him and threw him down.

"There is no place for us now that the forest is the only place to hide, but you have wiped out all the trees and left us high and dry." He was in great discomfort, but he managed to sit up.

"Is there anything wrong with you? I take down the trees, but you slay people."

"This is what you think. We have been listening to the same tale since 1947. Every cause needs a sacrifice of life."

"Which is the reason you are talking about, the way you dislike my mission. I too dislike yours."

"You're abhorring our decision hardly matters for the reason that you will be no more alive. But before that, it was obligatory to have a chat with you so that you may not live with the notion that you have been killed without any charge."

"I am completely innocent."

"You have robbed us of our woods and are claiming to be innocent. You've stymied the ongoing 'movement,' and you're claiming innocence."

"But I'm not the only one to blame."

"You're having a good time with them, despite the fact that you know they don't belong in Kashmir."

"They do belong to Jammu."

"What happens next? Do you know what they're up to? Deforestation is not their goal, but depriving us of shelter means

death. Those who suffocate the voice of the Kashmiri people fear murder or disappearance."

"I don't comprehend you."

"That is no longer relevant; there is no need to comprehend anything. Give me the rope; we'll hang him here; why waste a bullet?"

A man pulls a rope from his backpack and creates a noose. Ama Lala trembles with terror. He does all he can to flee, but the four lads tie a rope around his neck and hang him. Thunder and lightning rang over the neighbourhood, followed by heavy rainfall. Ama Lala tosses his legs for a while, but then he becomes silent. The horse waited for his rider and called again, but received no answer, eventually going to report to his master's house. Sara tends to the horse as normal, but the absence of Ama Lala troubles her greatly. She calls him and, as a result, leaves the village. Her screams frighten the entire community. She knocks on the village chief's door, but she receives no response and finds no one at the door to listen to her. She is spotted wandering around the neighbourhood before daybreak, and then she learns that Ama Lala committed suicide by hanging herself and that his dead body is hanging in the forest. Sara's waiting for her husband begins at this moment, and her clock stops at that moment. This occurred some 22 years ago, but for the last 22 years, she has been observed waiting for Ama Lala at sunset on a regular basis and remembering her children as they were then. Time has barely moved for her. She still insists on her children reading the books, just as she would have done 22 years ago.

"That mother's frozen time has to end. This case is in my laboratory, and I'm performing research on it and attempting to find a cure. This is our struggle, and we must overcome it."

The entire hall applauds and gives a standing ovation.

"This is a commendable job," someone shouts in the audience. Dr. Mushtaq continues to deliberate upon how frozen time affects the mind and brings the full scenario of the Kashmir conflict to the forefront.

He claims, "The use of electric shock is not intended for all patients. There are disorders that do not necessitate shock therapy, but their criteria are distinct, and these criteria must be discovered in order to heal that mother." The same ailment became the conference's focus. Almost all the papers were on the same issue, covering conflict zones. At the conclusion of the conference, it was disclosed that a pharmaceutical capable of altering the challenging mental composition had been developed. To determine the medicine's legitimacy, its efficacy should be evaluated in humans. Doctor Mushtaq submits his name as well in order to receive the drug. He thinks this drug is safe for the mother. The next day, in the Municipality auditorium, the awards for the greatest medical services were presented, and Dr. Mushtaq was named "Scientist of the Year." Around 12 pm, Dr. Naveed receives a message. He opens his eyes to read the message: "Dr. Mushtaq, your instructor, has been named 'Scientist of the Year'." Dr. Naveed hurriedly dials Dr. Mushtaq's number, but his phone is repeatedly switched off since the function is still active.

The mother was much quieter than before. She couldn't recognise her children or the nurse, and she couldn't communicate with anyone. Dr. Naveed was sorry about it, but Dr. Farah was relieved that she had put an end to all her ills, including her boys and husband, and the time period in which he was now free of any bondage. Every part of her brain had been muted; recognition and reasoning had already been rendered ineffective. This ward was packed with patients, each one unique and harbouring a distinct ailment. Aside from these patients, there were two additional ones, Saima and Dr. Farah,

whose diseases were linked to the institution. She was still nurturing her ego as she grew older and had not yet opted to settle down. Dr. Naveed seemed to be the ideal choice for her. She had still to articulate her feelings for Dr. Naveed, and she found it difficult to convey her desire to him. She would have trusted Saima, but Saima was not a dependable person on whom she could rely, so she had to do everything on her own. She was constantly reading novels, watching movies, and reading poetry in order to discover a clue, a way out to find a place in Dr. Naveed's heart. In any event, her argument was honest, taking into account her family's position.

The summer season has begun. Acacia flowers were seen throughout the fort. The white Acacia boughs had greeted the Parbat with open arms, as if these flowers had been handed to Mata Sharika by a devotee and as a symbol of respect at Sultan-ul-Aarifeen's tomb. The fort's exterior had been altered so often that it was impossible to interpret. It seemed like summer in the summer and winter in the winter. That is why the Mughals built a great wall around it, or why it may have been walled before them so that its wealth remained within it. In any case, these are high-ranking references, and their lofty levels are above the normal references, and we are standing at their feet as a common human population.

Meanwhile, Dr. Naveed had meticulously written Shazia's paperwork, noting all the problems she would experience after giving birth. He had said that this pregnancy had been forced on her and that abortion should be permitted. Although it was too late, murdering him after birth was a difficult, if not impossible, task. Dr. Naveed had contacted every doctor in order to make them appreciate the gravity of the situation, and the file had been signed by Dr. Farah as the head, so he proceeded to her room. Her arrival was an incredible delight for her, as if the sun had risen from the west. As he entered the room, she gave him a

standing ovation. Dr. Naveed was taken aback after taking notice of her behaviour. Without asking for anything, she signed the file.

"Doctor Farah, you have not voiced any objections?" He inquired as he folded the file.

"When one lacks faith, doubts arise. I believe in you and your intelligence, and I like your talent."

"Thank you so much; I am really grateful to you. If we do not do so, it may take an unpleasant shape and impede her rehabilitation."

"Indeed, we must overlook this unsightly situation if she is to have a happy life."

"Thank you very much, doctor; you share my conviction."

"Dr. Naveed, this bizarre disease has overtaken us. We are not making visits to male wards where the situation is worrisome; they are in poor condition, and one just despises this institution when picturing their condition."

"Dr. Farah, I've seen a significant shift in you today. I used to think you weren't as serious as you are now, but I've changed my mind about you. You, too, share Dr. Mushtaq's and my viewpoint." Thank you very much, Dr. Naveed. "We are caught up in unfavourable conditions. Otherwise, Kashmir was never psychologically ill because there was no crime or anything associated with the area. We were, in fact, Rishis. We didn't need these hospitals."

"Of course, it looks as if we now require hospitals in every nook and cranny, and the worst thing is that no one has a solution to this problem."

"Dr. Naveed, there is a solution."

"What exactly is that?"

"We should all depart, and we must flee this area. I believe a curse has been initiated by a sage."

"Ha-ha," Dr. Naveed chuckles at first, but after a time, he asks:

"Where should one go after abandoning one's property and possessions?"

"Wherever the Pandits go, aren't they in a better position than us?"

"No, they're not all well; they're just like us, but their ration is the smallest, so they're the least marked."

After that, there is a brief period of silence. Dr. Farah rises and approaches Dr. Naveed.

"My father says, 'I'd want to meet you.'"

"And for what?"

"I'm not sure."

"Of course, I will attend to him because, first and foremost, he is your father, and second, he is indeed a Chief Secretary, and the health department too belongs to him."

"Come to dine with us."

"When?"

"It's all up to you, at any time you choose."

"Certainly, I'll notify you then."

As Dr. Naveed left the room, Saima was seen standing at the door, listening to all that was said. She could sense what was going on in Dr. Farah's head, but she opted to remain silent. Dr. Naveed is taken aback when he sees her standing at the door.

"What brought you to the door? You should have shown up."

"I believed you were having a chat with each other. That is why I stayed here."

"Thank God, the file has been signed, and tomorrow we must transport Shazia to Lal Ded Hospital, where the abortion will take place, and we must both accompany her."

"Doctor, I'd like to notify you that Shazia's behaviour has changed significantly. Are we making the wrong choice?"

"This is not her child, Saima, but a black mark, a scar. She can't keep bearing this wound much longer. No, Saima, whatever we're doing is fine. You must give her this medication and keep her prepared for tomorrow."

"As you please, Doctor."

Shazia's abortion was performed the next day under the supervision of the medical superintendent. Shazia responded appropriately; she obeyed every direction and seemed to be a proper woman. She had closed her eyes and was floating in mid-air when she was brought out of the operating room. She simply ignored the pain; her face remained devoid of any painful expression. She opened her eyes after a few hours, when Dr. Naveed arrived. She'd painted the tiniest grin on her lips.

"By the grace of God, Shazia, you look better today." "Today, my vengeance came to an end." "What exactly do you mean?" "Guilt was consuming me, but today I cut its roots." "But you hadn't done anything wrong."

"I had erred."

"What type of sin was that?" "I should not have wandered among men since I am a woman."

"But how do you recover so immediately?"

"Doctor, you worked a miracle; otherwise, I'd label every man a murderer."

"Anyway, rest now; we'll shift you tomorrow."

"Why should I go there, Doctor? What is the point of doing it now?"

"If you believe me, Shazia, I'll know which place is best for you."

"After all, Lord, I have faith in you. Whatever you ask of me, I shall do it wholeheartedly. You are the only owner of this existence."

"It is the lord's property." That's all right, Saima. Take excellent care of her."

Shazia remained staring at him before closing her eyes. Her gaze was drawn to Dr. Naveed. She continued to converse with him, and when she fell asleep, she was completely unconscious of it.

The mental hospital evolved gradually. The atmosphere, treatment, and facilities improved over the previous year. Everyone seems to have evolved.

Dr. Farah's objectives would be thwarted as she sought to get closer to Dr. Naveed. As promised, when Dr. Naveed arrived at Dr. Farah's house that day, he was completely enthralled to discover a lovely world of elites. For the first time, he realised the power of money. He felt depressed and insignificant. A magnificent mansion to astonish everybody stood on the edge of Dal Lake, reaching up to five kanals. The inside was fit for a king's chamber. Expensive carpets on intricately carved wood flooring. A captivating interior linked a drawing room next to the dining room and the sleeping chambers on the second floor. Dr. Naveed's observations would be enhanced by balconies that

invite the heart-throbbing beauty of Dal Lake on one side and the rich beauty of Nishat Garden on the other. Dr. Naveed will pay great attention to everything. Dr. Farah led him to her bed chamber, where she stood like a portrait of Mona Lisa hung on the wall. He continued looking at her, admiring her exquisite grandeur. When the painting moved, he realised it wasn't a painting at all, but rather a pulsing figure of Dr. Farah. They had a lovely talk about a range of subjects, including domestic care, hospitals, and, most significantly, Saima. Dr. Farah advised him to avoid Saima since a nurse and a doctor are never a good match, and the entire hospital is watching everything and is looking down on you cruelly and disapproving of your relationship. Dr. Naveed sat quietly listening to Dr. Farah's advice till darkness came and her father arrived. He was escorted by numerous authorities and was watched by security officers as he reached the school, but he met Dr. Naveed. He waved them off and embraced Dr. Naveed as if he had known him for ages.

"Dr. Farah extols you and proclaims you to be a miracle doctor."

"It makes me happy to know that my seniors think so highly of me."

"No, you deserve it, you please carry on I will attend to you after a while."

"No, you earned it. Please keep going. I'll get back to you as soon as I can."

Following that, the talk proceeded before moving out into the open and strolling on the lawn, which was decorated with a colourful lighting system, as if every step was linked to the illumination. The bulbs followed the person wherever he or she went. Dr. Naveed observed a new universe around him till the clock struck 9 pm and they sat down to eat. A complete meal of Kashmiri Wazwan² was served, followed by Saffronised Kahwa³

When Dr. Naveed looked at his watch, it was nearly 11 pm. He stood up and walked over to his father.

"I feel an urgent need to go. It is now too late."

"Spend a night with us."

"My family will be waiting for me, sir. Perhaps next time."

"Please do not address me as Sir; you are my son. Please pay us a visit from time to time."

"All right, doctor, I'm leaving you right now."

"Come on, let me lead you to the gate."

"No, please remain here. There is no reason for it."

"Come on, I'll take you to the gate."

"No, please stay here. There isn't any cause for it."

"No, Naveed, our culture urges us to accompany the visitor."

"By using the word 'guest,' you have further alienated yourself from me," Dr. Naveed observed with a smile.

"Not at all; visitors are the most cherished individuals."

"And that visitor ought to leave."

"But not from the heart," Dr. Farah abruptly revealed what she had been keeping hidden.

"Dr. Naveed was taken aback, but he managed to keep his expression neutral."

"This meeting must be interpreted as a foreshadowing of our future relationship, one can hope at least."

"Why not, doctor?"

"Tell me, Farah... Ah! I like the way this name sounds."

"How about Farah?"

"Please close your eyes."

"For what?"

"Would you please do it?"

"All right," Dr. Farah says as she approaches Dr. Naveed and whispers something into his ear.

"I love you."

When Dr. Naveed opened his eyes, Dr. Farah had already left. And there are just lights from all sides. Dr. Naveed couldn't believe what he heard. With this inquisitiveness, he started his car and drove away.

This encounter only served to enhance their bond, and Saima would suffer as a result of their proximity. It was difficult for her to observe the couple's warm relationship and the care they would take for each other. But she had no idea how to deal with the circumstances. The friendship progressively grew, which led Dr. Farah's father to visit Dr. Naveed's father.

We hadn't yet provided a thorough explanation of Dr. Naveed's residence, and you must have been waiting for it as well, but discussing something too soon would result in nothing. Now is the moment to do so. Dr. Naveed's father was previously a well-known Hakim⁵. He maintained a business in Fateh Kadal⁶ where he practised. Patients would travel long distances to see him in order to be cured. He had never tried to get a job with the government. When he married Naseema, he acquired a plot of land in Barzulla as a dowry, on which he constructed his house. He launched a new store. Fateh Kadal, as well as the old-style home, faded from my memory with the passage of time. He became famous and wealthy after opening a new business in Barzulla. He has two daughters and a son. The son was the

youngest, and he had married his daughters with great pomp. His first daughter's husband lived in Abu Dhabi, while his second daughter married into a wealthy family in Lasjan who owned a brick kiln. Hakim Sahab was also well-off, but now Dr. Naveed also supported the family. But Dr. Farah was financially ahead. Anyway, Jan Sahib arrived at Hakim Sahib's house to discuss the future of Dr. Naveed and Dr. Farah. It happened at a time when Dr. Naveed was not at home. The Hakim Sahib was overjoyed, and the wedding date was set. Dr. Naveed's home began to fill with precious presents and expensive stuff. Aside from gold, an Apple laptop, phone, and watch, foreign suits, a shortage of cash, and four kanals of land at Shalimar on which a cabin was already built, all of this stunned Kashmir, and it was remarked, "She was the sole girl and deserved the luxury." Marriage was impossible in Kashmir because of the hostile environment, yet it is stated that money makes the mare go. Those who had raised their voices had their voices muffled. In a nutshell, luxury was everywhere. Dr. Mushtaq rejoined his work on the wedding day and visited each ward. First and foremost, he attended to his patient, the mother, although she did not recognise him or interact with him. He scanned her file. Saima stood by Dr. Mushtaq's side.

"Who suggested ECT to her?"

"Dr. Saima."

"What? Wasn't she stopped by Dr. Naveed?"

"Sir, he was in Delhi at the time."

"Oh my God, Saima has ruined all my hard work! The entire study has been harmed." He lost his cool as he tore the paperwork and stormed out of the ward.

"Where have they both gone?"

"Today is their wedding day."

"What! Dr. Naveed, Dr. Farah." He chuckles.

"What happened, Sir?"

"You have no idea what has transpired, Saima. I've been wrecked, reduced to dust. This medication was going to be tried on her. I would have received a Nobel Prize nomination. They assassinated me. They have annihilated me. Saima, I'm going nuts. I will turn mad."

"Please, Sir, there must be a way out."

"Every way has been closed."

Saima offered him a glass of water as he clutched his face. He blinks open his eyes and dashes to his ward. He stands at the mother's side and says, "Mother, do you know who I am? I've brought you some medication. I am not your physician. Do you recall having young children?"

She doesn't say much. Dr. Mushtaq tried all he could to get her to remember her history, but it was as if she had set fire to everything. She is unable to recall anything. As Dr. Mushtaq was leaving the ward, he noticed two of her sons arriving with a basket of fruits.

"Greetings, Doctor. We learned of your coming and came to greet you with a gift. 'We appreciate all you've done for us. Our mother is finally at ease. Maybe she's getting better. She doesn't remember her history, and she doesn't force us to go to school. She calmed down, and you deserve credit for that, doctor.'"

"By the way, you dirty, man-eaters are not worthy to be named her sons. Is this a present for me? Hell with you, you're a bunch of morons."

He flung the basket, and the fruits rolled over the room's floor. The staff were all taken aback by Dr. Mushtaq's abnormal

development. Both sons were astounded by his actions and only stared at each other.

Dr. Farah and Dr. Naveed, on the other hand, express their readiness to be tied in the bond following the Nikah process.

There was delight all around, which added to a fresh chapter of merriment. The guests are welcomed and greeted as if they had arrived in heaven. Everything appears different, corresponding with the hospital's frozen time. The fairies are hard at work, serving the dishes to the visitors. The young girls were dancing to traditional regional music. Mega screens were set on all sides of the area where the Nikah ceremony took place. Dr. Naveed and Dr. Farah's photographs were framed on a few screens. In a few displays, he was shown contemplating whether he was, in fact, alive and whether everything around him was genuine. After some time, the pair were spotted greeting each other.

It appeared as though the entire night was dressed up in the skies before raining down on the earth. The arrangements captivated everyone. When the guests finished their supper, they were each given a gift. A gold-coloured chain secures a little walnut box richly adorned with delicate woodwork. No one dared open the package to discover what was inside. The package had astonished everyone, and the visitors gradually began to leave. An automobile caravan was parked in one of the parking lodges. Drivers were leaving the parking lot, transporting people to their destinations. The plan was for the guests to welcome the newlyweds and say their goodbyes before leaving. The arrangement was for the guests to greet the newlyweds and say their goodbyes before departing, and till that point, drivers would take their cars out to wait for the visitors. Possibility was a wild boy's game, with every move resonating in the ether. Finally, Dr. Naveed and Dr. Farah ate their meals with a few close relatives, and it was already 5 am. The dawn was revealing

its splendour, and Dr. Farah was preparing to go. The majestic architecture, the pomp and show, supported by incredible luxury and comfort, were impossible to overlook, but it was the only alternative at the time. Her father embraced her as she stood on the grounds, looking back at her palace. Both their eyes welled up with tears, and Farah's mother, too, was crying at her daughter's leaving. Farah moved briskly and took her seat in the Mercedes followed by Dr. Naveed and the car moved from Nishat to Barzulla. The dawn was dancing on the water film of Dal Lake and from the Hari Parbat the dawn was showing off its appearance. The situation at the hospital was different. Both Dr. Naveed and Farah were aware of the proceedings in the hospital. The couple seemed restless to pen the new chapter of their lives. Both had sealed their lips only to save their expression for that extraordinary moment of ecstasy. The automobile passed through Gagribal, then the historical marketplace. Dr. Farah gave a serious expression for the first time. Perhaps she was introspecting to gather strength for the challenges that were ahead. Her in-laws appeared to be too far away from Amira Kadal⁷ but when she caught sight of the river Jhelum⁸ she was surprised, as she thought her world had transformed along with her wish lists and objectives. She scanned the entire river that was silent, perhaps too busy to script their narrative.

She was so absorbed that as the automobile drove through the entry to Dr. Naveed's house, all she could hear was: "It is our home, and I cordially invite you to stay with me. You must regard what is there, in order to save my love and respect for you." These words whisked her away to another planet. The thunderous *Rouf*⁹ welcomed her as she stepped out of the automobile. The scent of *Izband*¹⁰ had already captivated the entire ambience. Her entire family waited in line to meet her, and she was startled to see how long they had been waiting for her all night. Dr. Naveed's mother led her inside, followed by the

rest of the visitors. Following that, a convoy of load carriers transporting the dowry arrived in Barzulla. Anyway, let us leave them with the noise and bustle and report to the hospital at 10 am, where Dr. Mushtaq and Saima are both unsuccessful and despondent. Today is a momentous moment in the history of medical science in Kashmir. At ten o'clock, Dr. Mushtaq entered his room, emptied his cabinet, and wiped all his research work from his desktop, which he had hoped would spark a medical science revolution. He sat down and clasped his hands about his face and recalled the moment when he was declared the scientist of the year. The reverberation of the shouts took a terrible turn and projected as an excruciating cacophony, forcing him to open his eyes and, in reaction, he shut his ears, pleading, "Please, for the sake of God, leave me alone. I can't be held responsible for that."

"Doctor, what happened?" Saima charged towards him with a glass of water, but she was only a phantom in front of him. He took a drink from the glass and said: "Saima, inform all the doctors and nurses to meet me immediately in the meeting hall for an important meeting. I need to address them all, but before that I shall pay a visit to the entire hospital."

"As you see fit, Sir?"

Saima obeyed the directions, told everyone, and returned to see the doctor.

"Come on, Saima, let us go around the entire hospital and check the status of patients."

Doctor Mushtaq met each patient to go through their case files. He administered medications for a few patients. As soon as he reached the ladies' ward, he attended to the mother there. He thought Shazia would recognise him, but she was still passive and unmoving. Dr. Mushtaq attempted all he could do to find her, but she had already crossed the line into the unknown. Dr.

Mushtaq just grumbled, rose to his feet, and reviewed Shazida's case file and smiled.

"Dr. Naveed's patient."

"Sir".

"She has received acceptable care. This is what I mean by therapy. I'm glad that Dr. Naveed will be able to accomplish marvels and take care of impoverished folks after me."

"Sir," she said simply, nodding her head. He finished the circuit, took a cup of tea in the cafeteria, and then attended to the waiting physicians and nurses in the hall. Everyone gave him a big round of applause and greeted him as he entered the hall. He looked around and observed:

"Dear friends, I greet you all with warmth and gratitude for your gracious comments and affection up to this point. Today I'm going to reveal something significant, which is why I summoned you here. I just believe that your time is valuable and should be committed only to the patients. You are all excellent physicians, and the truth is that I failed to be an excellent and comprehensive physician. As a doctor and as a friend, I failed on both counts. But my efforts are not to blame for my failure. If anybody is to blame, it must be my luck and my studies. I failed to instil the best of myself in my students."

"Sir, what exactly do you wish to convey?" inquired a senior doctor.

"Please be patient. I'll go through everything. I began my investigation into a case that was serious and fascinating around fifteen years ago. Many doctors were inspired by my research to conduct their own. I became so engrossed in my research that I forgot about my family, clinic, and hospital, in addition my patients. I thought I had accomplished my purpose for being born on earth. All this research would have revolutionised the

medical sciences if it had been effective, but it never matured. In my absence, the laboratory where this case could have been tested was destroyed. I'm not criticising the physicians since I know they didn't do it on purpose, but rather out of ignorance. However, I lost credibility with international organisations because it was the only such case I was working on. It was providence's will, and I failed terribly. Your doctor, Mushtaq, has failed you. I've completely lost it. Keeping this in mind, I have already submitted my resignation to the Health Ministry by e-mail, and he will receive a printed copy only today. I'm assigned to this department till dusk. I have let down my friends." After saying this, he left the hall, and quiet descended, with everyone searching for the cause of the silence. They'd all worked out who the offender was, with the majority of fingers pointing towards Dr. Naveed, but no one dared to say anything. Everyone followed the doctor, groaning and embarrassed, save Saima, who paused for a moment since she was aware of the fact. Till Dr. Naveed returned, she was torn between exposing the perpetrator and conceiving the truth. The resignation of Dr. Mushtaq went viral on social media. Many news outlets broadcast this story and were continually debating whether or not the resignation should be accepted. There were a plethora of question marks. As the word spread, hundreds of phone calls to the hospital questioned Dr. Mushtaq's departure. For the first time, the physicians believed that resigning might cause such a commotion in civil society. For the first time, they realised the significance of their vocation. It was the talk of the town, and everyone expected him to stay for the patients' sake. In any case, it was an unexpected day in the history of Srinagar's mental hospital when an honest chronicle summed up the end of an era. This news reached Dr. Naveed as he was engrossed in his wife's mesmerising bevy. He felt he had to take the phone call, and he had no choice but to pay the punishment for the violation that had occurred. He was thrown out of the magical realm. He felt

compelled to accept the phone call, and he had no option but to pay the penalty for the infringement. He was expelled from the magical world and he was astounded at what prompted Dr. Mushtaq to quit.

"What are you saying, Farah? The news is, in fact, serious."

"I, too, am curious."

"Dr. Mushtaq has stepped out."

"So, what now? If a doctor resigns, the proceedings at the hospital will not be halted; the show must go on. Patients will continue to recover; he is not the sole doctor."

"However, Farah! What prompted him to resign?"

"As a result of his interaction with patients, 'he has become a patient.' He'd lost his senses. Leave this matter alone; tonight is not really the night for it. This night is yours to have; it was made for you. This is the first night where we will be able to contemplate our new venture in close proximity."

"I'm aware of it, Farah, and I'm sorry I was upset enough to be removed from that world."

"This world belongs to you. It is constantly welcoming you with wide arms."

Naveed was keen to know what had caused his instructor, Dr. Mushtaq, to quit, and Farah was anxious to hold him in her arms on the silky bed, aided by her silken body and touch.

She was not willing to waste any time and was eager to spend each and every minute with Dr. Naveed. She was not in the mood to lament Dr. Mushtaq's resignation. She wrapped her youthful, exuberant arms around her husband and whisked him away to a realm where she was in charge of everything, even the moon and the sun. They selected a road that was strewn with flowers. Everything was done in the presence of air. Everything,

except the words, was abundant in this silence. Perhaps because the words might waste the luxury of the night besides its purpose, they preferred to be wrapped in the blanket only to lay the foundation of their new life. The way this night was full of superfluity for Dr. Farah and in reciprocity, it was a horrible night for Saima. It was like an ending saga of pain; she was not able to sleep for a fraction of a second. Her mind was preoccupied by the thoughts of Dr. Naveed. She was certain that Dr. Naveed and Dr. Farah's marriage was nothing more than a farce. He would definitely divorce Dr. Farah and marry her, she reasoned. She was certain that she loved Dr. Naveed unconditionally, but the circumstances were not in her favour. Saima lay on her bed, shattered and despondent, waiting for the first ray of light.

Everything, with the exception of the sun, may be postponed. The sun rose at its scheduled time, with curfew enforced in five areas. During the night raids, a young man was killed. When the news leaked early in the morning, there were protests in numerous places, and the government responded by imposing a curfew. Curfew and the Valley, by the way, would have something in common. It was clear that the city had had enough of the curfew. When this city shed its old garb and became a new persona, a spell of despondency and helplessness was cast in its wake. Regardless of who is to blame, this is not the time to argue. Return with me to the psychiatric hospital, where melancholy and depression pulsated like an extended metaphor. Dr. Mushtaq's resignation was accepted by the administration, and the major concern now is who will replace him. A flame-like sensation branched over Saima as the order reached the hospital. In her fantasies, she envisioned providence flavouring wickedness on occasion. How could she be in charge of this hospital after killing many patients? She had a million questions in her head, but none to answer. By the way, she was

able to get to the hospital by presenting her identity card as a cursive pass. She thought the atmosphere was strange and monotonous. Dr. Farah was still to begin her duties as hospital director, but her name was already displayed on the board, and how that happened was a mystery. Satima walked into the women's ward, which was desolately quiet, as if every patient had sensed Dr. Mushlag's resignation ramifications. For a long time, bed number twelve in this ward had been occupied by a middle-aged lady. She was constantly observed muley monitoring everything while protecting a handbag under her arm. She never encouraged anyone to take the bag from her. She would cry and raise her voice to the sky if any doctor or nurse touched the bag during the round. Even her relatives were unaware of what the sacs held. When Satima entered the ward today, she motioned for her to approach. Satima was caught off guard by her reaction, which she had not expected after five years. Satima approached her with trepidation, and the lady motioned for her to take a seat. "What do you need?" Satima carefully asked.

"Yes, so."

"Don't be worried, your God will take due care of you."

"But who told you I am depressed?"

"Daughter, I know everything. I have not spoiled my life like this. I hold everything in this head."

"However, you've been desolately silent up to this point."

"I had none at the time, and I may lose it again, but I keep a careful check on what's going on in this ward."

"How much do you know?"

"I'm aware of everything around you, including the warmth in your eyes, his greetings, and his response to your remarks."

"Didn't you know it all ended the other day?"

"Don't give up hope, daughter; someone will adorn your life."

"Ha ha! ha!" exclaimed Satima and reacted with a chuckle.

"I am not very fortunate, mother. I'm very aware of how unfortunate I am."

"Fate is a difficult concept to grasp. Nobody knows who'll be escorted where."

"I believe you are all right now, mother, and you may return home."

This proposal elicited no response. The mother remained silent. Satima maintained her focus on mother.

"To whom will I entrust them?"

"Who?"

"All these relatives, that daughter in the corner, and everyone else."

"However they do not belong to you; they, like you, have been admitted here for many days." Satima inquired, but the mother burst out laughing.

"Who else could they be if they aren't my relatives?"

"What do you mean?"

"Do you know when that girl is going to be discharged from

"You want to go home, but what is your connection with her?"

"She left her home here alone."

For the first time, Saima heard her speak seriously, and she

couldn't tell if she was speaking to a patient in a mental asylum

or a legitimate professional. Saima sensed that Dr. Naveed's therapy

had improved the patient's health and that this ward was about

to become completely empty and the hospital's reputation would

be tarnished.

"God must rescue us from such a magnificent place," she prayed

to the Lord in her heart, but she was keeping a careful eye on

mother at the time and was amazed to see how quickly she

hated to see Dr. Naveed, Dr. Mushiaq, and Dr. Farah in one of

the ward's rooms. She was ready to leave, but she

abandoned the idea of leaving and sat next to her and grabbed

the bag. She said, "What is in the bag?"

"O Thief! Are you curious about my valuable? I will never

reveal it, no matter how hard you try. I am aware of what you're

observing. I know you're all looking at my bag, but I'm not

going to give it to anyone. Now I see why you kept pulling me

into beautiful conversation. After hearing her, Saima was

astonished. She couldn't say anything. She was now unsure if

the person with whom she was conversing was the same old lady

or someone else. She sighed deeply and walked away. The

Saima till she left the ward. Saima returned to her room with a

troubled expression on her face. She sat in her chair, closed her

eyes but kept her inner eyes wide open, and her mind

acrobats threw her around for a long time. She suddenly felt

the weight of arms on her shoulders. She was taken aback as she

"You, Dr. Naveed."

"I have joined today, Saima."

"Why such an urgency? You should have stayed a few more

days."

"Saima, this is not a job where you can take vacations. It's

similar to worship, and one must fulfil one's responsibilities

perpetually."

"True, but it is an admiration for all those who take it

seriously, for the others, it is merely a liability."

"How's everything going with your family? I have several

grievances, but one of them is serious: you failed to attend my

wedding. Permit me to investigate as to why?"

"There's no identifiable reason; there's just nothing."

"What do you mean, nothing? Is it true that my marriage

made you unhappy?"

"Why so doctor? I am happy, but it all occurred so quickly

that I couldn't get the time to ponder or act."

"Everything happened in a moment; it was just genuine."

"Tell me about Dr. Farah she should be congratulated on

her appointment as the Head of the Institute of the hospital."

"Thank you, but why did Dr. Mushiaq resign?"

"As soon as Dr. Mushiaq arrived from America, he got

right to work on his patient, who had been entrusted to you."

"Yes, I remember. The first thought that came to him as he

opened his file was who gave her the electric shock."

"It was Dr. Farah. I informed him. It was at this point that he tore open the file and the documents attached, revealing that all his hard work had been for naught, and that he had been ruined, and he resigned."

"On that day only, Saima, I sensed it, but she committed the sin, and it was pointless since she had already crossed the narrow line where a mind loses all its splendour."

"Doctor, I just experienced an unfathomable experience."

"Saima, what happened?"

"The patient on bed number 12 signalled me to attend to her and spoke to me as if she were a scholar. When I asked her about the bag, she acted inappropriately once more. She verbally attacked and ridiculed me while displaying no regard for my well-being."

"Saima, Stephen Hawkins claims that a human mind does not need a body to exist, and that it may live without one. Because his body was paralysed but his perceptions and emotions were unaffected, he revealed it. Because the mind functions like a computer and copies and pastes events, emotions and sensations are necessary to bring the human mind into a living mode. However, there are a few events that do not require the copy and paste process and remain buried in certain recesses. When a man goes to those corners, he becomes the product of those experiences, forgetting everything else. And the doctor's task is to locate that missing mental component."

"However, I can't help but wonder what's in her language, which she refuses to give anyone."

"She must be carrying something important in it that is emotionally connected to her."

"Maybe... let it go. How was the marriage?"

"It was all right."

"Are you happy, doctor Sabir?"

"Indeed, delighted Saima, now it's your turn to get married."

"I'm ready, but where can I find a man? The one who was no longer with me."

"What do you mean, there isn't a shortage, and a lady like you will find the right match?"

"These are merely jokes; finding a soul mate is really tough. Those women who are fortunate enough to discover a perfect match are the luckiest."

"Saima, you, too, are fortunate; I have a feeling you will meet the right man who will fully support you."

"God willing, by the way, you should host a celebration."

"What's to stop you? We would have gone out for lunch today if it hadn't been for the curfew enforced around us."

"I must have the option of selecting the place."

"Allow it to be. If that's what you want, I'll pay a visit to my ward and then proceed to the OPD. Please deliver my tea to that place."

"That's fine."

As Dr. Naveed walked away, Saima kept her gaze riveted on him. Saima closed her eyes after he left, trying to save every frame of the encounter in her mind. She spent a long time experimenting with the frames as they appeared in her mind's eye. She was afraid that if she opened her eyes, the frames might break apart, so she didn't see the time till it was past one o'clock. She was shocked when wall clock struck 1, and she immediately rose, made a cup of tea, and went straight to OPD to assist Dr.

Many changes occurred in the world around us as time passed, yet nothing changed at the hospital. In the hospital, there was no change. It was becoming increasingly worse, like a sick person. The family of the patients, as well as the physicians and

finished her tea, gathered her belongings, and left the room. the causalities at Khanayar and Nowhatta passed her care. She Outside, the curfew was strictly enforced. A passing reference to inquiry. She steadily sipped the tea from the cup she had raised. "Was it a nightmare or a dream?" She persisted in her

was nowhere to be seen, so she went back to her room. smelled like Dr. Naveed. She dashed to the ward, but Dr. Naveed hands. She scented the towel as she raised it in one hand. It disorganised state as when Dr. Naveed had left it after drying the room, where she discovered the towel in the same couldn't believe what Dr. Iqbal had told her. She dashed back to

"I'll be fine," Saima became deafeningly silent. She leave till then, do you understand?"

"Dr. Naveed will start next week, and they will both be on

"What?"

"Come on, Ma'am, you're daydreaming. I was in OPD till now since he wasn't here today."

"No, doctor," I responded. "When I saw him, he told me to take his tea to OPD."

"Dr. Naveed, don't you know he was married recently and how could he be here so soon?"

"Dr. Iqbal, where is Dr. Naveed?"

preparing to leave. She rushed inside the room. over. She kept looking until she came across Dr. Iqbal, who was was curious as to where the doctor would be after OPD was Naveed. The OPD was empty; there was no one around. She

"Don't be concerned; Qadir Kak, God will see me through. I simply beg Him to grant me strength." She crept into her room with this order in hand, taking her belongings and a few important documents with her. She noticed an envelope and remembered that it contained some cash. Dr. Naveed was busy prescribing something on the paper when she took this envelope

order copy. her. Saima regarded the nervous person who had given her the "She has shown her true face," when this ward was assigned to was welcomed by the odour. It seemed almost punitive to have exercise extreme caution. It was a scary ward where everyone inmates. Before entering that ward, the physicians would It was crowded, chained unit with violent, mentally challenged immediately." It was one of the hospital's most infamous wards. midst of it all, an official order read: "Saima must join Ward I

Saima would always be there to help Dr. Naveed. In the long way from reality, which remained a mystery to everyone. consensus was that her ego had wrecked everyone. But it was a Dr. Farah was now the hospital's director, and the widespread were visited often to be readmitted and discharged as needed. secluded in rooms, a few were chained in lockups, and many successful therapy was a pipe dream. A few patients were substantial number of newcomers, owing to the fact that alarming rate. In addition to the elderly patients, there were a on the hospital, causing the number of patients to rise at an

There was some dreadful enchantment casting its evil eye physicians, like Dr. Naveed, were giving it their all. once Dr. Mushatq quit. Despite the fact that many young hospital had lost its charm, discipline, and excellent treatment expressions. The only thing on everyone's lips was that the nurses, were all heartbroken. Peace was lacking in everyone's

and reported it to him. He paused his writing as soon as he noticed Satma and smiled, greeting her.

"Satma, come in."

"Dr. Naveed, take this."

"What exactly is it?"

"You told me to keep this money safe since it was given to me by Shazia's mother." "Yes," I recall. "Why are you handing it over to me?"

"Now that I've been relocated to ward 1, I'm no longer linked to you," she says.

"What! Ward number 1, how is it possible for a nurse to be in such a dangerous ward, who has issued this order? It is an injustice."

"Your wife."

"No way! How could she make such a blunder? I'll talk to her."

"Please, doctor, there's really no need for that," Satma said.

Satma convinced Dr. Naveed not to call Dr. Farah. Dr. Naveed continued to mull over this directive, pondering what kind of hostility it was. Satma walked out, leaving the cash on the table, and Dr. Naveed pondered what to do with it. In the meantime, Dr. Farah came into the room.

"Would you prefer to leave, Naveed?" "Certainly but I have a request to make first."

"Right now, I'm not in the chair."

"But you are on duty and that is why it is obligatory to maintain protocol."

"All well, then."

"Leave the car here."

"Please get out of here. I'm going to get into my car."

"Let us go, Naveed. The driver is on his way."

"Those who have recovered must not revert to their old ways."

"This is an administrative matter, and such commands must be avoided. Furthermore, we have a large number of patients hospitalised here who are here in the ward without displaying any signs of violation and must be discharged as soon as possible. Every day, we're getting more patients. Mental illness has enveloped the entire Kashmiri population."

"Please accept my apologies, but there is no harm in considering a good suggestion."

"You're supposed to show me what's wrong and what's right."

"That's exactly what I'm saying. This is an incorrect order, it needs modification."

"Please, Dr. Naveed, don't argue about it. We must not escalate our responsibilities with our personal relationships."

"But, Ma'am, why?"

"I don't have to defend my directives; they're for the betterment of the hospital and ward."

"However, this order must be supported by reasoning."

"I have faith in her; she will never disappoint me."

"Of course, what's the problem?" "Ma'am, Ward 1 is a dangerous ward; even male members are afraid to enter, and then there's Satma, who is a lady."

"You've moved Satma to ward number one."

"No, we could need it at home, and tomorrow is a holiday as well."

"So, I'll be waiting for you at tea. Please arrive as soon as possible."

Dr. Naveed remained in his chair as Dr. Farah went away, pondering: was it love, hate, or true faith in Saima, or was it simply an excuse to hurt her? He left the room with it, putting the envelope full of cash in his locker. As he walked out of the room, he noticed that everyone was concerned and upset by the order, but no one dared confront the authorities. At the tea, Dr. Farah was waiting for Dr. Naveed to arrive home.

Dr. Naveed was ready to have his tea when he got a call from Saima.

"Hello".

"What?"

"What was the reason? Please contact her family, and I will return shortly."

"What happened, Naveed, and who was on the other end of the line?"

"It came from the hospital; one of my patients in Ward 12 had hit her head on the window and is now unconscious."

"Anything may happen at any time in a human mind; one cannot trust a mind."

"Are you talking about me or my patient?"

"As for the patient, she was speaking like a philosopher yesterday and is suddenly aggressive again today."

"How can she forget that she has lost two little sons?"

"Of course, this is a catastrophe that has spread throughout Kashmir."

"Who was on the other end of the line?"

"It was Saima."

"Oh".

Dr. Naveed went to the hospital without finishing his cup of tea. Dr. Farah stood on the balcony and watched him go.

There was considerable pandemonium in the mental hospital. Saima had summoned physicians from the hospital's emergency room. The physicians recommended that the patient be sent to SKIMS or another hospital once they had evaluated and treated him. Meanwhile, the gate pass and the file had been prepared, waiting for Dr. Naveed to arrive. He evaluated the patient's pulse and other vital signs and advised that he be sent to the hospital right away. He calls for an ambulance. Doctor Naveed and Saima, the patient's family, accompany her. While the ambulance is travelling to the hospital, Dr. Naveed is constantly monitoring the patient's vitals. Saima is carrying the patient's sac, which she would like to keep hidden from everyone.

"I think her journey is over," a relative remarked, hopelessly.

"Let us place our trust in the Almighty."

"She used to have faith in him, but now she doesn't."

"She was the mother of two young sons," says the narrator.

"They were as attractive as Yousuf, but no trace of them could be found."

"How did the cops feel about it?"

"Police involvement was debatable."

"What do you mean by this?" the doctor asked her relatives.

"Doctor, have you ever thought about all the young people that went missing and where they went?"

"I didn't have time to think about it; I, too, believe she has given up today."

"She has been waiting for their homecoming for the past few years."

In the meantime, an ambulance arrived at the hospital's entrance. Dr. Naveed immediately shifted her to the intensive care unit, where she was placed on a ventilator. While Dr. Naveed and Saima took care of her, the rest of the family was asked to remain at home. Dr. Naveed was certain she would die, but he was doing everything he could to help her. She gave up her ghost in the middle of the night. Dr. Naveed let go of her and rested her head against Saima's shoulder.

Saima! Your Zaiba has died, "What happened, by the way?"

"As I was ready to depart, I decided to pay a visit to all the patients because I might not be in that ward after tomorrow. As I approached her, she sprang from her bed and tossed her head against the window's steel grill, causing her to be flung down and lose consciousness. Then we put a bandage on her wound until you came."

"Troubles inevitably accompany a disturbed spirit, inform her family members of her demise."

"If you don't mind, I'd want to see what this sac contains that was previously unavailable; otherwise, this question will torment me for the rest of my life."

"It has to have something in it."

"Let's have a look at what she has in her bag." Saima untied the knots in the sac and discovered some garments, copies, and pictures. Saima's eyes glistened with salt as she inspected the images.

"These are her sole possession, her boys."

"Yes, she'll be joining them right now. Close this sac as soon as possible. Please notify the doctor and her family. The legalities will be completed by then, and her body will be handed over to her legal heirs. You did, in fact, call me. What was the purpose behind this?"

"Yes, I called because I sensed her death approaching; it is now gone, and she is no longer in pain."

They both walked out to get the family and located them in the canteen, where they informed them about Zaiba's death. They were on the verge of collapsing. Her brother was one of them, and his friend was the other. They received the deceased's sac from Dr. Naveed and Saima. Dr. Naveed and Saima raced back to the ICU and decided to wait till the morning because moving back in the middle of the night was tough. Naveed and Saima stayed up all night on the hospital's steel benches, discussing Zaiba and her absconding boys. They would reflect on her fate at times and on Providence at other times.

No one from the mental hospital comes out alive. After the death of Zaiba, a breaking news hit the stands which was in the form of an article by Dr. Mushtaq, who was still rendering his services to the nation. He was of the opinion that there is hardly any home in Kashmir which is not affected. And every year the number of mentally disturbed patients were touching the peaks and from 1990 the political conditions of Kashmir had triggered the flow of such patients. Conflict not only takes a toll on life but also on the mental health of the people living in the conflict zones. Mental hospitals would have come in handy to tackle

such problem, but then the hospital was itself ailing badly. But after all it was a hospital.

Despite the fact that the ward was in a horrible state, Saima was a regular visitor and was well-versed with the patients and their ailments. The shackled patients, most of whom were lost in their own worlds, would urinate and, at times, sip their urine, with a few of them screaming hysterically. As represented in every Hollywood film, this ward was a dangerous place. Saima, on the other hand, was insistent on averting them. She had accepted the task and was no longer afraid. In the ward, Dr. Naveed would pay her a visit. Dr. Naveed was greatly pleased by Saima's passion and tenacity.

Dr. Naveed invited Saima to his chamber one day. It was time for lunch. Dr. Naveed stepped up and sat next to Saima.

"Saima I'd like to invite you to a celebration; please let me know if you prefer lunch or dinner."

"Dr. Naveed, it was simply a passing request that day; we'll have lunch together someday; just relax."

"I have no objections, but having lunch with you will undoubtedly add to my preference."

"But how?"

"Because you are one of the hospital's toughest troops who battle without being rewarded."

"Doctor, I'm doing my job and that's all there is to it."

"Without people like you in the department, it would undoubtedly collapse; all right, enough of the accolades, let your come straight in, lunch or dinner."

"Let it be dinner,"

"Fine, I'm going to leave. At 7 pm, I'll come to your house and fetch you."

"It's fine."

She followed Dr. Naveed up to the front gate and then raced back as he left. All these facts were not hidden from Dr. Farah; she was unaware of them. Dr. Naveed and Saima were being watched by her spies all over the place. Today, many new patients were admitted, and dealing with such a rush was a difficult assignment, but the hospital management was not prepared to take it on. To keep the spectacle going, several physicians and nurses had to submit, often against their choice. Saima was capable of carrying out any task that had been set for her. When Saima approached the female ward, she saw that bed number 12 was vacant. She crept in quietly and took a position near the bed. As she sat on the bed, a voice spoke to her, "What are you up to?" Zaiba was looking at her when she turned her head.

"Oh! Mother, you are no longer alive. What brings you here?"

"Oh daughter, how can I die? I need to wait for my children, who must be on their way."

"If that's the case, then why did you just give up?"

"Who was it that informed you I'd given up? I was merely tired of waiting for my sons here, so I shifted my location for a brief period."

"Waiting is excruciatingly terrible."

"Don't be concerned; everything will fall into place."

She laughed and remained silent after that. She overheard a commotion in the background and looked around to see if the ward boy was escorting a patient. Today, this bed was assigned

to someone else. Saima sprang to her feet in a flash. The ward boy carried young and gorgeous lady. "She is a new patient who has been admitted by Dr. Naveed," they remarked after speaking to Saima. "Is she alone or escorted by someone?"

"Her mother and brother are outside the ward waiting for her."

"Leave her alone. I'll make her sit. Come on, my sister, take a seat here."

When Saima used the word 'sister', she got a full-throated smack and a barrage of invective. The ward boy was taken aback, although everything in the ward seemed normal. In hospitals, such situations are prevalent. The patient sat on the bed by herself.

"Can you tell me your name?" Saima inquired.

"What do you have to do with my name? Do you have to reveal my name to army men?"

"No, no, I am your sister. Why should I reveal it to army men?"

"Go ahead and tell them. What can they do about my foot, anyway?"

Saima was nervous, and she had no choice but to leave the ward. The patient's brother and mother were waiting for her as she walked out of the ward.

"Are you people with her?"

"Yes, sister, we are with this unfortunate lady."

"What has happened to her?"

"Don't ask Sister, she deserves to die, but we can't see her in her present state."

"What was the reason?"

"A few days ago, there was an altercation in our hamlet in which two lads were slain."

"They had to be her kin,"

"No way! Sister, this has been a lengthy narrative of misfortune and bad luck. She was engaged to one of them."

"Let it go, mother. A doctor must be familiar with the patient's medical history."

"It is fine, you can go; she's been hospitalized and physicians will take care of her, God willing, shall he be so kind and shorty."

"Can you tell me where the doctor is?"

"He's gone, and he'll see her tomorrow."

"Does she require any special treatment, such as medicine or something else?"

"No, everything she needs is already here. She will be supplied with all she deserves."

They both left, and Saima returned her gaze to the ward before departing, concluding that the patient was at ease on her bed. It was now 4 pm, and she needed to leave to make plans. She entered her room, gathered her belongings, and as she walked down a long corridor, she wondered how Dr. Farah would react if she knew about the meeting. She received a phone call from Dr. Farah when she was at the gate. "Yes, Ma'am," she said as she hung up the phone and looked up at the sky before reporting to Dr. Farah. She knocked on the door and asked if she might come in.

"Yes."

"Am I allowed to come in, ma'am?"

"Thank you, Ma'am."

"Thank you, Ma'am."

After saying this, she walked out and decided to give Dr. Naveed an excuse to cancel their dinner reservation. She picked up the phone and dialled Dr. Naveed, who accepted her explanation without hesitation because she was truthful and honest with her statements. This meeting was not disclosed to Dr. Nahed. He was overjoyed when he learned of the writer's decision in Saima's favour as the institution's director and for finally upholding her obligations. Dr. Farah was also shocked after this meeting since she was able to release the heaviest burden she was carrying in her heart. This meeting was crucial for her at this point since she was pregnant. Her in-laws were constant to hear the news. The entire home was decked out in lights to commemorate the occasion. A total of twelve relatives and friends were hired for the entire week. Family, friends and coworkers were all invited from 8 pm onwards. The husband and wife would greet their visitors on the lawn. The celebration, which lasted seven days, was also attended by Saima. Dr. Farah was now completely happy with Saima, as the former had managed to trap the latter in a well-thought-out plan. Saima was now actively avoiding Dr. Naveed. Despite the fact that nothing like this was visible, she was aware enough in her heart not to damage Dr. Farah's sentiments while she was in a family setting. How long is this party going to last? Let us leave it at that and return to the hospital, where the number of new patients was increasing at an alarming rate and elderly families refused to volunteer to bring their loved ones home. They refused to take on the obligations and would rather have their patients remain in the hospital at any cost. No one exhibited any compassion for their patients. Dr. Naveed, on the other hand, had made up his mind to discharge a few people right away, including the ones

who was now completely unaware of what was going on. She'd turned off all her senses. Everything was analogous to her mental state; no one was unfamiliar to her, and she had even lost track of time. For her, the difference between night and day was negligible. She could easily be cared for in her house presently. Shazia was next on the list, since she was doing well, but couldn't find anybody to take her home.

Initially, Dr. Naveed invited two sons of a woman.

"I believe she is no longer in need of therapy at this facility. She has reached the point where she requires your prayers and support."

"But would it produce any results? She hasn't recognised anyone for a long time."

"Your services, understanding, and love and care will be enough to make her feel better. That is the only therapy she needs at this time. Now it's up to you to get her home."

"But, doctor, how are we going to get her home in these circumstances? What happens if she turns violent? It would be difficult to deal with her in such a case."

"First and foremost, she will not get violent again since we have been monitoring her for many days, and if God forbid she does become aggressive, the hospital will take care of it."

"But we'll take her home once she's fully recovered."

"That is no longer possible. I recall Dr. Mushtaq advising you not to admit her to the hospital, but your request forced him to do so, and his entire life was ruined as a result of this patient. Her discharge certificate has already been completed by me. Today, you must transport her to your residence. A change of environment might be quite good for her."

"It is all right doctor."

...who are supposed to fulfil this need will do so. All this befits the one who has mandate of it, and you are unfit for it."

"This isn't my passion, but it is something that Kashmiri really needs. It is necessary to be aware of the convulsions. Those who are supposed to be aware of the convulsions."

Dr. Mushtaq was listening to his wife while driving the automobile as they came home from a night party.

"Doctor, I've told you before, and I'll tell you again, you must shun politics and continue to do a commendable job as a doctor; there is no need for you to change careers."

for them, but when their father served as a role model they were born talented, and their father served as a role model for them, but when their father entered politics, they both altered their beliefs and turned against him.

criticised by his family. His wife, who was also a doctor, was studying medicine at AIIMS and the other at JNU.

and social activists. He went across the country, using the psychiatric hospital as a model for his campaign. Despite his widespread popularity, he was harshly criticized. His wife, who was also a doctor, was

of his purpose. He was looking for a way to bring about a solution to the Kashmir problem. In this respect, he met with the approval of the Indian government as well as the country's politicians.

...but his strategy was head and shoulders above the rest in assigning from the services. In any event, only he [Kinnocks] was the evolutionary reason that he was thrust into the position.

His opponents constantly attacked Dr. Moushag for power, which is why he

...much praise for elevating the matter of violence, which had a negative impact on the studies and goals quickly grew into a grassroot movement. He argued that the matter of violence, which had a negative impact on the studies and goals quickly grew into a grassroot movement.

...that after 1990, the populace had been exposed to a negative impact on Kashmir as a whole.

The Psychiatric Ward • 81

would deteriorate and that the people would perish. He was arrested twice for writing such an essay, but he was quickly released.

the mental institution as a weapon in a political battle, wreaking havoc on the political landscape. He posed a million-dollar question: how come, with Kashmir's large population, the tiny number of such patients is regarded as significant?

dedicated the rest of his life to helping such patients. Previously, he would treat the patients with medicine and therapy, but now he has turned to writing to address their condition. He has used the mental institution as a source of material for his books.

political rationale and the extent to which this condition is justified.

and reproductive system, after living in these conditions for a few months, he was hospitalized and received treatment for a few years. Should some place or harm to the environment of this hospital should be inspected, politicians and the circumstances.

may have a profound awareness of its role in the world. No other case, Kashmiri, therefore, is unlike any other in many aspects. Kashmiri is a unique and irreplaceable part of the world. No other

They both moved in following that order, it appears that the wreath was moved in following that order.

"One should not run such a household; they had to go."

"I'm missing her," "I'm missing him." Should give me a similarly expression."

are still here.

and will here."

may they have been placed as their destination, Salma, but we

and Dr. Naveed, the son of the other brother, Sharma remains there for a time, till Dr. Naveed shows her a picture of him.

[illegible]

100

"They've been trying since 1947 with minimal success, which has added to the public's dissatisfaction. Do you know how many Schizophrenia cases are diagnosed in Kashmir each month?"

"I work with patients as well, but our focus must be limited to medication and that it can treat them to a considerable extent."

"Treatment is, of course, required, but how many people may profit from it? How many asylums will be built? By the way, every household in Kashmir is a mental institution that houses a variety of patients."

"Doctor Sahib! You're tinkering and playing with fire."

"How come?"

"Do you think anyone can understand you in this scenario since no one is with you?"

"One must attempt; it is up to man, and the reward lies with God."

"Atif buzzed me last night, and he's worried sick about you."

"I'm not sure why you're all so concerned. Am I taking any risks? Am I siding with anyone? No, all I'm saying is that conflict must cease because it has resulted in mental illnesses, which is why death is looming over us and we've been forced to succumb. I am not accusing anybody or whatever is to blame."

The car arrives at the gate, the horn alerts the guard, and after parking the car in the garage, Dr. Mushtaq exposes himself to his wife while strolling on the lawn.

"Don't worry; God will see right through me and Kashmir." I think there are many people who think like me."

"Can you tell me when you'll be leaving for the conference?"

"The following day."

"It's fine; we'll pay our respects at Syed Sahib's mausoleum tomorrow night. It is Thursday tomorrow!"

"It'll be all right."

Since Dr. Mushtaq realises what is going on, he is perplexed as to why people are so concerned about him when he isn't doing anything wrong. It was impossible to bring peace to Kashmir since the people sought the goals of numerous agencies, and no one was willing to go forward in building a peaceful environment in Kashmir. Kashmir has become a market where the youth of Kashmir are set ablaze in place of petrol, diesel, and coal. Dr. Mushtaq was able to examine everything after the Geneva Conference. He was of the opinion that there are facts outside of medical literature that can aid in the treatment of mental illnesses. At the conference, Dr. Mushtaq gave a powerful address. He displayed the data in front of everyone. He was briefed about Kashmir's mental state, and he mentioned a few diseases as well. The conference was summed up in his address. When Dr. Mushtaq came to Kashmir after that, he was questioned by everyone, and during one of the interviews, he hinted at the third possibility, which he must have discussed with powerful and prominent establishments. This possibility went viral in Kashmir, and many began to wonder how it could work.

Dr. Farah, on the other hand, was on her way to a prosperous life. Dr. Naveed would prefer to stay with her. Dr. Farah was on leave, and Dr. Naveed would report early to take her shopping and for casual walks and short visits. They would visit a classy shopping mall to shop for the newcomer. Hardly knowing about the gender of the newcomer, they would

"It's true, but please don't tell anyone. At the very least, Dr. Farah isn't aware of it."

"I get what you're saying. But why has God treated me so harshly? I just have one daughter and it is terrible that she is nursing such an incurable sickness, it is unfortunate."

Both returned with the appearance of having been dragged for a long time. Both had a despondent expression on their faces, but they were unable to convey their sorrow. One thing was certain: this condition did not result in immediate death; rather, depending on the severity of the disease, one could live for five to six years, or even ten years. Dr. Farah progressively healed from the delivery period, but when she looked in the mirror, she would wonder why her health was deteriorating. Everyone has a child, but her deteriorating health was a source of concern not just for us, but also for her. This was a query she posed to her mother.

"Daughter, it so happens, all that you would eat has been transformed into this baby. May I offer my life to him? Now you will improve your diet and will recover soon, and when you return to your duties, that will in turn help you recover."

She was a doctor, yet she relied on her mother's suggestions. A mother is, in reality, in our culture, one such entity, and with this conviction, Dr. Farah continued to believe in her. The baby's head was shaved, followed by his circumcision. As the baby showed signs of growth, Dr. Farah's health continued to deteriorate. Dr. Farah's mother would visit shrines and saints in addition to giving offerings and donations. Everyone was now concerned about Dr. Farah's abating health. Dr. Naveed would witness her declining health and would conclude that with every passing day, death was creeping in and that she would continue to lose her cool while unveiling her intelligence more and more every day. She had already surrendered to the sickness and was

certain that death might strike at any moment, so she had accepted it without question. She had nothing to be concerned about since she knew her parents would back her no matter what, and her in-laws would provide her with the finest possible care and attention. When her father-in-law was notified by his son that his daughter-in-law had contracted a life-threatening condition, he couldn't sleep. At the hospital, Saima would spend a lot of time with Dr. Farah. Saima was a favourite of hers, and she loved conversing with her. In the whole hospital, they were the talk of the town.

Shazia was the sole female patient in the old lot who was still there. She has yet to be discharged after so many years. It was evident from the hospital records. A memorandum was issued against Dr. Naveed for it. In his defence, Dr. Naveed provided evidence of five letters that he had written to her relatives, but in spite of that, there was no response. Now that the mother had also returned to the hospital, it was too difficult for the hospital to manage full strength of the bed. Dr. Naveed had to listen to music in this regard.

One day, he mustered his courage and addressed Shazia:

"Shazia, you are now fine. You must go back to your home and how long will you be here in the hospital?"

Shazia was silent. She didn't reply and kept looking at the ceiling.

"Shazia, I am addressing you."

"Doctor, the home belongs to the family and relatives, but all my relatives and family members have refused to associate with me. They've pronounced me dead. My relatives have buried me alive, and now you want me to return to them. They're not going to take me in. No, I don't believe so. I've been left here to be terminated, so where do I go now?"

"I understand your dilemma; the way this society has damaged you makes it impossible for others to embrace you. Isn't it unfortunate? However, I have decided to send you to your destiny. I'll drop you off there with the truth they've been avoiding."

"Please don't do that, doctor. I still have hope that they will visit me eventually; and it is this hope that has kept me alive to this day. It will automatically kill me if they blatantly reject me."

"Why should they discard you? It will warm their hearts when they see you. After all, a daughter's suffering may melt any stone, much less their hearts."

"Doctor, they are not merciless?"

"What are they then?"

"They believe in hollow conventional religiosity and are animals, beasts. They don't recognise anyone and have no personal identity."

"Let us see how deadly they are, Shazia."

With this in mind, Dr. Naveed chose to deliver Shazia to her house the next Sunday, with Dr. Farah, the department's chief, accompanying him along with Saima, who took excellent care of her. Now that they're all looking forward to Sunday.

Dr. Mushtaq's Track 2 diplomacy, on the other hand, reached unprecedented heights. He began a conversation with all the parties and agencies that could be able to assist him in achieving his goal. He urged everyone to raise their collective consciousness in order to pursue Track 2 diplomacy in order to bring peace to Kashmir. Dr. Mushtaq was the one who started this psychological war. He was certain that this was the only way to bring peace to Kashmir. Conflict has deteriorated into a major issue. He believed that Track 1 diplomacy needed to be

accompanied by Track 2 diplomacy. For centuries, the battle has absorbed the Kashmiri people, and it should end up somewhere. Everyone was hoping that Track 2 would provide some hope for the Kashmir dispute since it was a unique undertaking and a novel concept to bring everyone together on one platform to discuss the problem. As time has passed, Dr. Mushtaq has risen to greater heights of recognition. He was well-known in Kashmir for treating mentally ill patients, and as he embarked on a new mission, people would have more faith in him than before. The multitude suffocated him, but his family members became angry. They believe that Kashmir is overrun by agencies and that the majority of the agencies are opposed to peace. They all want to keep the subject alive because it is important to them. His son, Atif, a mass communication student, was alerting the family about everything that was going on. He came to meet his father and learn more about the functions of government agencies in Kashmir. "Abu, I came to meet you with the purpose to suggest that you should shun Track 2 Diplomacy."

"But why Atif? Is there no one who can assist our nation in finding solace? Is there no one who can stand out for her in the name of the motherland? We've been suffering like this for the past thirty years, bearing the load of submission. I'm sure the hospital's laboratory can attest to that, and my co-workers can attest to how many people they would admit. Many mentally ill people are admitted." It appears that the entire state of Kashmir is mentally impaired. "Abu, there is no second opinion about it. This motherland has equipped you with an intellect that befits a doctor only to serve the patients who are mentally sick."

"But how many are there? How many people can be healed and treated? They are growing in geometrical progression like mushrooms."

"Please, Abu, it's a twisted situation from top to bottom. This has the potential to throw your entire existence into disarray."

"However, why?"

"Why don't you realise a death warrant has already been issued for you, Abu? They're out for your blood."

"Who? Who is trying to take my life? Atif, please understand that this is merely a rumour. This information was also received by me. A phone call was made to me as well."

"From here?"

"From the other side, my associates, on the other hand, notified me of the situation."

"Allow it to go. Why are you delving into this matter when it's so delicate? At the very least, consider my mother. 'My JNU friends are always urging me to advise you to shun this path, and they have really coerced me to speak to you about it.'"

"They have little to do with Kashmir's political situation."

"You know, it's not only about two or three agencies; the Kashmir issues have engulfed the entire globe, and I recommend that you stick to your own profession because it's the best way to help your motherland."

"At this point, I can't afford to make a U-turn."

"Yes, for the sake of my mother and brother, you must."

"All right, I'll step down from this. My resignation will be submitted tomorrow. Is it fine with you?"

"Thank you so much, Abu. I'm flying back to Delhi tomorrow."

"Allow us to accompany you to Delhi and spend a few days there so that Fahmeeda may relax. Let us spend a few days together there."

"Certainly," she says.

Atif's mother, Fahmeeda, joined him as he left his father's chamber.

Atif was ecstatic. "What was the reason?" she inquired. "He has encouraged me to return to my career and forsake politics."

"It was not possible to make you to take the correct decision. We are uninterested in politics. It does not suits us since we have earned our money honestly throughout our lives and that we must avoid all this at this stage of life."

"I had no idea of owning a business. My sole goal was to bring this battle to a close. I didn't have any other ulterior motives."

"You don't have any, but various individuals have different viewpoints. Do you believe they have faith in you? Since 1947, people have only been duped."

"What matters to me is that my intentions be known to my God, whether they trust me or not. Let us now set aside all of this. I will make my resignation public tomorrow and announce it on TV channels, stating that I have no involvement with Track 2 diplomacy."

"It was difficult to persuade you to resign."

"We're travelling to Delhi for a few days tomorrow, so please finish packing and apply for leave so that we may spend time with our children."

"How thoughtful of you."

Dr. Mushtaq's wife becomes ecstatic and wraps her arms around him, kisses his forehead.

"At this point, I don't have anything against you."

Dr. Mushtaq couldn't sleep because he was convinced that his mission was the only way to solve the situation. He believed that history would not forgive him and that anyone might reasonably ask, "Why has Dr. Mushtaq forgotten his homeland?" It was Dr. Mushtaq's second failure. His second dream was ready to crumble to dust, and the night came to an end as he reflected on it. Overhead, a fresh dawn broke. Dr. Mushtaq was all set to fulfil his commitment to his children and wife. He'd already planned what he'd write in the newspaper and how he'd reply to anyone who questioned his decision. At 10 o'clock, Dr. Mushtaq left for his office, which was directly across the street from Partab Park. All the newspaper offices were within walking distance. Dr. Mushtaq's car was driven inside the press enclave and parked in its designated spot. The driver could sense that three motorcyclists were waiting for them to arrive, and he asked Dr. Mushtaq to stay in the car.

The racing motorcycle approached Dr. Mushtaq's automobile and fired three shots into his body before he could respond. He was knocked out. Dr. Mushtaq's blood was splattered all over the Press Enclave. The driver was still reeling from his ordeal. "Dr. Mushtaq has been slain," someone said. The shock of his death reverberated across the valley as a result of this. Doctors proclaimed him 'brought dead' as he was brought to the hospital, and Track 2 diplomacy perished with him. The problem was only made worse by the accident. The entire city came to a standstill in a matter of minutes, and the deceased were transported to Zafraan Colony, which is located near Srinagar, which is why people could reach it easily and quickly. Atif's state was unbearable; he hid himself in a corner of his house. Fahmeeda wounded her chest when the dead

corpse arrived. Friends, family, co-workers, and others attended the burial, and the mourners quickly filled the whole campus of his house. Everyone claimed that anyone who attempted to think about Kashmir would suffer the same fate. One thing that bothered him was that his decision to resign from Track 2 Diplomacy was kept secret from everyone except his son and wife, and the rest of the world assumed he was a martyr for a cause, which he was. The death came as a shock to Dr. Naveed and Dr. Farah. As soon as word of the death reached them, Dr. Naveed and Dr. Farah arrived at Zafraan Colony with Saima. Following that, the whole hospital staff showed up, and the entire hospital appeared vacant. When the lifeless body of Dr. Mushtaq was prepared for the last journey to the cemetery, it was far too difficult for me to explain the scene in words now that insane men are in charge of the hospital. Every heart was throbbing, and every eye was searching for an answer to the question: why was he killed? What was his transgression? He was attempting to resolve the Kashmir issue. Dr. Naveed and Farah stayed there for a while to soothe Dr. Mushtaq's wife, who was inconsolably sad. Atif was similarly distressed; he was unable to calm his mother or convey his anguish. The casket was carried to the burial while *Allah O Akbar* and *Lal Ilaha Illallah*, were chanted. He was led to his grave by these blissful verses. He walked on to his final resting place, leaving behind all his property, affluence, renown, and numerous other worldly possessions, carrying only his deeds. His second son had also come from Delhi in the interim. Both brothers brought their father's body to the grave and buried him beneath the heaps of clay. Dr. Mushtaq's death marked the beginning of a new chapter in Kashmir's history. The tombstone was raised at his burial after a few days. But there was one question that neither his grave stone nor lips could answer: "What caused it to happen? What was he slain for, and why was he killed?" No one could think about it or talk about it. As time passed, Dr. Naveed

and Dr. Farah had to leave Shazia off at her home as time passed, but they had to postpone the plane due to the adverse conditions in the city. The army and police conducted raids around the city in order to apprehend the youths for questioning. They were attempting to apprehend the boys implicated in the murder as quickly as possible. There was no organisation that took ownership of the situation. On the other hand, Dr. Farah was rapidly losing her health, but her willpower was strong enough to overcome any challenge. She was completely aware of her illness at this point. That is why she was reading Stephen Hawkin's biography and contributions to the field of mental health with great interest. Stephen Hawkin's willpower impressed her. Farah spent most of her time at her mother's house, and her in-laws never faulted her. Hiban would also leave his mother alone on occasion, despite the fact that he was too young to do so. In one case, a maid was hired to look after the requirements of a newborn who was being fed on a regular basis. His mother's illness was his greatest misery. Dr. Farah's father was anxious about his daughter and planned to send her to America to treat her sickness, but Farah was certain that she would not travel anywhere. "I'm all right now," she'd say.

There was a noticeable difference in the hospital following Dr. Mushtaq's death. Despite the fact that he was no longer the director of the Institute, his absence caused a breach of confidence among employees. Everyone had been devastated by this point. People used to speak and argue, laugh and share their insights in the hospital, but this was no longer the case. Everyone was still in shock and would have a hard time getting out of it, but the number of patients was steadily mounting. A few years ago, Dr. Mushtaq had submitted a proposal to the government to expand the hospital's wards. The idea was accepted after his death, and a few wards were built at the hospital to accommodate the new patients. This block was titled 'Dr.

Mushtaq's Advanced Psychiatry' since these wards were built independently. Dr. Farah's mental condition was disrupted following the death of Dr. Mushtaq. She was persuaded that the chair she was sitting in, as well as the room she was in, had formerly belonged to Dr. Mushtaq, and she was now convinced that death was lurking around the corner, waiting to pounce. Dr. Mushtaq's Track 2 Diplomacy, on the other hand, did not accomplish the results he had hoped for, but it did instil a sense of awareness, suspicion, and dishonesty.

Dr. Farah had decided that Saima was the best of the lot. She kept her close to her at all times and shared everything with her. In the female ward, Saima was almost a doctor. She was well-versed in each patient's medical requirements. She could readily handle the paperwork required before administering shock treatment to a patient. She'd eventually get Dr. Naveed to sign the papers allowing her to run the unit. It would reflect on his patients if the doctor himself was hurting or distressed. The same could be said of Dr. Naveed's patients, but Saima would do her best to make up for it. Saima was adored by her husband and wife since they would see her fulfil her chores honestly. Dr. Naveed's image in her mind first altered dramatically as a result of Dr. Farah's treatment of her as a younger sister. Dr. Farah has told Saima about it several times. Even today, when Saima was making coffee for Dr. Farah, she got out of her chair and approached her. She was standing next to a window where Hari Parbat could be seen plainly.

"Why did you stand up, Doctor Farah?"

"Nothing, I just thought I'd go for a stroll and see what I could do to assist you."

"Dr. Farah, you should not be standing for long periods of time; please have a seat; I will make the coffee."

"Saima, I wish I had a sister like you to help me through these difficult times."

"Isn't that correct? Is there anything else I can do to help? You are free to ask for anything, regardless of the time or day."

"Saima, I already owe you a lot, and I don't think I'll be able to investigate much further. I realise what I should do if I die while carrying this burden."

Saima's eyes were filled as she approached Dr. Farah, carrying a cup of coffee.

"True, you regarded me as a stranger, because strangers endure their own problems, but those who are familiar do not. I'm not doing you any favours; it's my moral responsibility as your subordinate to obey you."

"All of this formal position, all of this servitude, is temporary. It's someplace in the head; it's simply an ego, and no one is superior or inferior to another. You, like me, are obliged to carry out your responsibilities. You do what you're meant to do, and I'll follow through on my responsibilities. Now, in terms of your assistance to me, I owe you a debt of gratitude."

"If you think it was a debt, let it be. But today facing the mausoleum of Makhdoom Sahib (RA) I declare that if at all you owe me something, I oversee it. I beseech that if you have any infirmity, let it be transferred to me because I have no obligation to count on, I was what I am today."

"Saima, may I offer my life to you? You are not just my sister, but there is an unbreakable tie between you and me. See, there are two holy locations on this mount: one belongs to the Pandits and the other to us."

"We have even divided them as well, otherwise there is hardly any difference."

The Psychiatric Ward • 97

"Indeed, please do plead for my safety. Hibari is still in infancy. What should he do at this age without a mother? Naveed cannot compromise; everything will be in a turmoil."

"It is my duty. If at any time death has any option left, I shall present myself in exchange."

After that, they were engulfed in silence. Everyone stayed still for a few minutes till Dr. Farah finally broke the silence by laughing out loud. Dr. Farah couldn't understand how someone could laugh so loudly after such serious contemplation.

"Is everything in order?" Dr. Naveed, I stated following my first encounter with Dr. Farah.

"Everything appears to be in order, yet there is a problem."

"What occurs, and what is the issue?"

"Dr. Farah is the only one who knows about this. I am a layperson."

"Can you tell me what's going on?"

"Saima thinks she'll ask the two guards stationed at the mount to swap my ailment with her health."

"Is Saima beseeching it for you?"

"Of course, but consider that if there is to be an exchange, it will be for more than just her health and your ailment. Many things have to be exchanged."

"I have nothing to save but this to get exchanged."

"Avoid thinking like that, Farah. God will see everything right. Motor neuron disease is not lethal. It is troublesome but we are with you. We will distribute it with earth and heaven. I will never give up."

"Naveed! Dr. Mushtaq used this room, this chair, and this table, and they are still here, but Dr. Mushtaq is no longer with us; he is searching for answers to his query under a mountain of dust.

"It's life; whoever is here must leave."

"Kullu Nafsin Zaa'iqatul Mau't" (Every soul will taste death)

"Religious conviction, of course, confirms it. Come on, it's nearly 5 pm, and we've completed all our responsibilities."

"Doctor, please give me your decision about Shazia."

"Oh, after getting mixed up with you, I forgot everything. We'll all accompany her to her house in Sopore tomorrow. We can't afford to keep her here before it becomes a questionable situation."

"Of course, Saima is welcome to join you. I'm going to remain here."

"The reason you are heading to this institute is that you have to accompany us. You have to initiate the move. We are only here to support you, nothing else."

"All right"

They all walked out of the room. They spot numerous patients bathing in the sun as they walk across the parking lot, including Shazia, who had positioned herself in a corner.

"Shazia, too, is soaking up the rays." Saima drew her attention to her.

"God willing, she'll be with her family tomorrow." Dr. Naveed then takes Dr. Farah's hand and exits the hospital through the front gate.

Saima remained looking at them, praying for the couple's long life. Dr. Naveed reappeared in front of Saima and drew her attention to himself.

"Why aren't you coming, Saima? Aren't you coming?"

"Yes".

She quickly rushes forward, and the main gate is closed. It was the month of April. The almond blossoms were all over the place. The trees were dressed with new bulbs. The fresh grass had already emerged from the confines of the ice. Dr. Naveed was driving. Shazia and Saima were seated in the back seat, while Dr. Farah was in the front seat. "Shazia, you are going back to your home after a long time." Dr. Naveed asked.

"Please put me outside the village and return, Dr. Naveed."

"Why?" Dr. Farah asked.

"Only then will I be able to discover my way."

"You can find your way, but it is our responsibility to give you back to your family."

Shazia then pressed her lips together and the silence took over the car.

The Range Rover continued to go along the village's picturesque pathways, enveloping everyone in a delightful sense of boundless elegance.

"How lovely this site is, Shazia!"

"Yes, doctor, our neighbourhood is just wonderful."

"Can you tell me how far your house is now?" While clutching Shazia's hand, Saima inquired.

"We're about to get there."

Because the car was tilted, no one could see through it as it went through the neighbourhood. Shazia escorted them till the car came to a halt in front of a massive arena covered on all four sides. It was the size of a cricket stadium, complete with beautiful floral arrangements. It had flower beds on one side and a large bungalow on the other. It had a garden connected to it that was well-kept by a few gardeners. The car came to a halt in the parking lot, and all four people exited. Shazia was saturated with perspiration. She sensed how the passage of time would affect her. Dr. Farah felt the dampness in Shazia's hand. She reached inside her handbag and dried her hands.

"Why are you so scared, Shazia? We're all rooting for you."

When the gardeners noticed her, they rushed over to her and lavished her with affection.

"Daughter, I had faith that you would return one day."

"Who's inside, Kaka?"

"Only Begam Ji and Razaq."

"He went out to participate in a deliberation. Please everyone, come inside."

Shazia's mother emerges, as the gardener rushes in, followed by Razaq, an elderly servant of this home who had cradled Shazia in his arms. With teary eyes, he rushes to embrace Shazia right away. When Shazia's mother saw her, she had a mixed expression of delight and terror on her face. But her love triumphs, and she hugs and carries her daughter inside. The atmosphere in the house had shifted. A well-decorated wood carving on the ceiling was helped by walnut paneling covered with superb works of paper mache, and a silken carpet was observed placed from the entryway to within the space. The interior was just gorgeous.

Shazia's mother provided chairs in the guest room for them. Sama was considerably more interested in the interiors of the house than she was in watching Shazia's mother's every move. Drinks and dry fruit were served first, followed by Kethwa⁴ and kebabs, as well as a selection of desserts. Shazia was escorted inside by her mother, and the two of them were discussing their anguish. Shazia's father arrived at the guest room in the wain coat and a Karakul cap⁵, he is a tall and dominating man. Dr. Naveed offered him a standing ovation as a mark of respect as he entered the room, which he returned cordially.

"I apologise for not informing you ahead of time, but I was forced to come here due to an emergency. I am Dr. Naveed."

"I recognise all three of you. Despite the fact that we have never met, you appear to have known me for quite some time."

"You may address me by my given name. Nisar Ahmad is my name. In any case, I'll get to your question. Doctor, I owe you three a great deal, and I deeply admire and appreciate you all, yet I'm overwhelmed by your efforts. You have saved my daughter's life as a patient, regardless of her identity. This exhibits your greatness and zeal."

"But, Shazia was your daughter and a part of your life, and you never paid her a visit to know if she was alive or dead." Dr. Farah inquired quietly.

"You, too, remind me of my daughter. However, you have no concept of how tough it is for a father of a daughter to live with the loss of his honour. I am a native of this land. I call this place my home. Then there is my society, my friends, and my foes and enemies."

"But Nisar Sahib why was Shazia to be blamed for all this?" Dr. Naveed only posed a query.

"She is innocent if you look at things from your point of view. However, if you look at things through my eyes, she is to blame for everything."

"What exactly do you mean? It is unthinkable for a lady to go into a room with four creatures and urge them to physically assault her on her own." Dr. Farah was on the verge of losing her cool when responding to Mr. Nisar.

"I understand your dissatisfaction, but you should not pass judgement till you have all the information." Shazia entered the room with tea as Nisar Ahmad was talking, and he stopped talking till she left.

"She is too responsible for the fact that she fell in love with a young man who had taken up arms and for whose capture the government had offered a financial reward of Rupees twenty-five lacs." He was kind and intelligent. Shazia had only met him a couple of times before. When I found out, I told Shazia she couldn't see him since his goal was distinct from hers, and she shouldn't interfere with it. Instead of my constraints, it was Shazia who met him. After a few days, he arrived at my home with a fatal weapon. My son Irfan came to meet him when he knocked on the door. He returned with an argument after his conversation with Irfan, and when Irfan arrived, he was terrified but had managed to stop him there. We agreed that Shazia should be transferred to Bangalore for a while because we had flats in both Bangalore and Delhi. Because of the climate, we thought that Bangalore would be the best place for her to pursue her education. The day we had to depart coincided with an encounter that lasted for two days. The youngster was martyred in that confrontation. For her, it was an awful shock. The entire area was enveloped in anguish. Hundreds of mourners attended his burial, and we decided to postpone our trip to Bangalore since we believed we were no longer in danger. After a few days,

word got around that the man who had called the cops was from the same area. A few days after the incident, he contacted Shazia and told her she needed to retrieve a few things from him since he had to go underground and Shazia needed to collect them at Bomli Bagh. Shazia went to see them in the hope that they would give her something, but they tore her to shreds."

"It's unfortunate that a few of our youngsters are making such a fuss over this."

"Shazia, on the other hand, is innocent since you told her to avoid her ways, which she does, but how does she know that such creatures are bred among the best?"

"Her mental health became a topic of conversation. It would be the talk of the town. We found it impossible to ignore them. Then, thinking like a creator, I decided to kill off the character who was always posing a threat to the storyline. We broke the news that Shazia had committed suicide by drowning on the day she was taken to the hospital."

"Oh! What a letdown. Have these boys been arrested later on?" Dr. Farah asked Nisar Sahib.

"This isn't only a problem for the police; it's also a problem for my child. They were chased out of the region and brutally murdered by the lads of the organisation to which that boy belonged. The entire neighbourhood was stunned to witness their tragic demise."

"Ask Doctor Sahib for advice; she is an unwelcome visitor in this house."

"She may, however, resume her life in either Delhi or Bangalore. She does not need to be concerned about money. She would be able to start again in any manner she wanted because there would be no traces of her past to follow her."

"But how will she be able to live alone in a place where she will have no family? It would be extremely tough to deal with her if she had a relapse."

"I am a part of this anguish, but there are no other options for me."

"We need to figure a way out. We can go out and find her a boy to marry."

"How is this even possible? Whom should we marry if we don't have a daughter?"

"Out of this district, out of this location, where no one knows her, where she doesn't have to live because of her father's identity."

"It's a difficult request; it won't be completed in a day, and it will take time, Doctor Sahib."

"The persona will emerge naturally if you nurture such a notion in your head. You're an architect, therefore you know how to kill a character and create a new one."

"You misunderstood me, Doctor Sahib. I don't hold a grudge against her. I am her owner. Her problems are also mine. The days she spent in a mental institution were a constant source of frustration for me. I understand that she is not to blame and that she is a victim of her own innocence."

"It is necessary to forget what has passed. Life requires momentum. God has showered you with blessings. You have the ability to accomplish anything," Dr. Naveed made every effort to persuade Nisar Sahib, but he said unequivocally that he had no answer to the situation.

Finally, as the car travelled through the hamlet late at night, there were just three of them in it: Dr. Naveed, his wife in the next seat, and Saima in the rear seat. When they left, Shazia

sobbed hard. She felt as if she had been cut off from her loved ones and forced to live among strangers. On her way out, Saima handed the envelope to Shazia's mother.

"This is the money you deposited with us."

"How come you haven't spent anything?"

"How are we going to do it? The government covered all her expenses. She had enough to wear, but she didn't need any money, and we'd been juggling this envelop around for quite some time. Save this; she might need it."

Dr. Naveed grabbed the envelope from Saima and handed it to Shazia's mother before leaving.

All three men were still thinking about Shazia. The vehicle resumed its journey, but no one was in the mood to converse.

"I'm hoping she doesn't hurt herself," Dr. Farah informed Dr. Naveed about this.

"After all, she's their daughter, so what can they do?"

"I don't have faith in them. I deduced from their talk that they are intelligent, but one should follow one's natural instincts. I'm sure they'll either murder her or banish her." They arrived in Srinagar, and Shazia was now a part of history.

The narrative of Kashmir evolved with time, but there was little change in Srinagar's mental hospital. It was possible that it was infected and suffering from a mental illness. This place appeared to be a victim of ill-intent since whomever was in charge of the institute had to deal with difficulties. Dr. Farah's health was deteriorating. Hibban had formed a bond with his father and assumed that he would be at ease in his presence. Dr. Farah would spend a lot of time with her mother. Dr. Farah was fully aware of this, but she didn't have a choice because her health was rapidly worsening. The father's declining health

prompted him to make a choice, and one day he decided that Dr. Farah would be transferred to America for further treatment. Despite Dr. Naved's best efforts to persuade him elsewhere on the planet, his father-in-law paid scant regard to Dr. Naved's advice. Finally, Dr. Farah's father sought advice from an American doctor and applied for visas. She needed permission from her in-laws before she could move. His maid and granddad were both present, Dr. Farah approached her father-in-law and greeted him as she entered. She seemed pale and tired. She would have hoisted Hiban if she hadn't been in any danger. Her cheeks were flushed with tears. Dr. Naved took a step forward and scooped his son into her arms. She hugged him and showered him with kisses. She repeatedly offered him her life. Meanwhile, her mother-in-law attended to her, hugging her and leading her inside. The presence of the daughter-in-law created a pleasant environment in the house. She stayed up late with Hiban, chasing him, playing with him, and resting on the grass when she was tired. The darkness stretched its wings as the light faded, and they all stayed together.

"This may be my last visit to you, Abu and Mummy."

"Dear daughter, what are you talking about?" Her admitting father-in-law scolded her.

"I'm travelling for therapy to America the day after tomorrow, Abu. Who knows what is ahead? It's possible that I'll return completely recovered or not."

"Don't even consider it; just look at Hiban."

"Death may pause because of him," She walked away after a few more minutes and said, "I apologise for not being of any

use to you and for failing to serve you all, even my own son. This is something I'm delegating to you."

"Oh my daughter! Allow you to recuperate; that is all that concerns us." Her mother-in-law got back to her. She hugged her, showered her with love, kissed her on the forehead, and repeatedly gave her life. After getting so much love and warmth, Dr. Farah burst out. She brushed her tears away and buried her head in her mother-in-law's arms. "Mother, I need something, and I know you're the only one who can provide it for me."

"Please accept my entire life; please tell me whether you even need it; I will not refuse."

"No, mother; I need permission from both of you."

"You do not need to get our consent. You are free to do whatever you think is best for you." Her father-in-law made the announcement.

"No, Daddy, I need to talk to you about something important, but promise me you'll give me permission."

"Who can refuse your request? You have the right to speak up," while caressing her, her mother-in-law informs her.

"I want Naved to marry, and I've seen the girl."

"What! What exactly are you proposing? Have we done something wrong with you that you're trying to put an end to our relationship?"

"That girl is in for a treat being with you. I was not fortunate enough to be with you, and only the fortunate are blessed with such a mother, father, and spouse. Despite my good fortune, I was still deflated by it. Let it go."

"What exactly are you saying, Farah? I didn't bring you here to hear all this," Dr. Naved informed.

"I've come to ask Dr. Naveed for permission. This union cannot be as beneficial to you as it is to Hiban. He needs to be able to rely on someone. He'll need someone to refer to as mother."

"No one save you could be his mother."

"If I live, there is nothing to be concerned about; if not, he will require one."

"It will be viewed at a later time. We don't have to talk about it right now."

"I can't carry this weight there; you must understand that a patient must be anxiety-free in order to heal rapidly. If you all want me to recuperate as quickly as possible, you must give me permission."

A spell of silence was then cast in the room. It was followed by a storm, which knocked out electricity. For a time, darkness dominated as if it were a tyrant. Dr. Naveed then switched on the inverter bulb. Farah reiterated her inquiry as the room was re-lit.

"How do you feel about it, Daddy?"

"Oh, my daughter! You've put us through a gruelling ordeal."

"Please, Daddy, pay attention to what I'm saying. It's crucial for this house, for you, for Hiban, and for Dr. Naveed."

"Then go out and find a suitable girl. I completely agree with you."

"I've already told you that we know who the girl is. Saima works as a nurse in a hospital. Dr. Naveed knows her. She's a trustworthy young lady, as if she were my younger sister."

"Saima! Farah, Farah! So, what exactly are you saying?"

"Saima is a good girl, fit for this house. She's not a doctor, but she's a lot more than that."

No one said anything, and they ate their supper in silence. When Dr. Farah entered her room, she discovered her photos strewn across the walls. A couple of hers, a few of Dr. Naveed's, and a few of them together. She was both relieved to see it and saddened by the fact that it would eventually be replaced.

"Dr. Naveed, you must not overwork your intellect. I am yours and will always be yours, but life must go on, and no one can deny that."

"Apart from Hiban, Farah, your memories are enough to keep me alive for a long time. I'm not in need of anything else."

"I need it, Hiban must have a brother or a sister, a solitary child is of little worth. I am the only daughter and you can understand my trouble. You too are an only son, see what is going on."

"All right, when you return from the US, we shall see."

"I shall depart only after this marriage has matured."

"You're welcome to speak with Daddy."

"It's my responsibility, not yours, to persuade him, but we need to know if Saima is mentally prepared."

"Your idea will wreak havoc on my life. Do whatever you need to do."

Dr. Naveed then pulled the comforter over him and promptly fell asleep. Farah stared at him for a long time, knowing that it was the last night, that these were the final moments, and that there would be nothing but separation after that. She expresses her gratitude to Naveed by saying, "Thank you, Naveed, for everything."

The morning ushers in a new era of optimism. Dr. Farah departs early in the morning and arrives at Salma's house, where ceremony is held, and Salma meets her in-laws. Farah leaves with Hibban in her arms. She sits in a waiting car and discovers gets out of the car.

"Dear daughter, when you leave tomorrow, do the this amulet on your right arm. We have come from a saint. We begged for your good health."

"Daddy..." In a moment, she embraces her father and refuses to be escorted by him. She wants the newly wed bride to get her due time. As Dr. Naveed descends from the car, the car departs.

At the airport, a large group of people gathered to say their goodbyes to Farah. Hibban was in her arms, and she placed him in the arms of Salma before departure. She walked through the glass door without looking back and vanished like a sound wave. Everyone could only stare as the plane lifted off and the trip faded from their view.

"Do you have any ideas? Shazia took her own life. The information was obtained from today's newspaper. They all blamed our hospital for her relapse and subsequent suicide due to a lack of facilities and sufficient health treatment."

"Allow them to write whatever they want. Farah, thank goodness, remained unaware of this and fled before she found out."

"It is, in fact, calming."

"Was there any mention of her parents in the rest of the article?"

"There isn't anything like it. The police are looking into the situation."

"It's all right, they'll contact us as well."

The plane crosses the Banihal, and everyone leaves the airport. Farah takes the newspaper inside the plane and reads about Shazia's suicide, which puts her to sleep, and her situation was the same even at Delhi Airport till she boarded the international aircraft. The plane sped across the night sky, heading towards a bright sunrise. The cacophony lasted for a while, and suddenly everything was silent. This saga stopped for me here, but not for readers it may not because the mental institution is still there and the patient flow continues. Every new patient brings with him new stories of oppression and tyranny. These are our own stories, and before it is our turn, let us say our goodbyes.

Notes

1. Chillai Kalan, or Chilla Kalan, is the local name given to a 40-day period of harsh winter in Kashmir. It is the coldest part of winter, starting from December 21 to January 29 every year.
2. Kangri is a small portable earthenware-lined wicker basket used as a warming stove in Kashmir.
3. Wazwan is a multi-course feast in Kashmiri cuisine that is regarded as an art form and a source of pride in Kashmiri culture and identity. Most of the recipes are meat-based, with lamb, beef, or chicken as the main ingredients, with a few vegetarian options. It is well-known throughout Kashmir. Waza means "cook" or "cooking" in Kashmiri, while wani means "shop." The royal wazwan is Kashmir's greatest ceremonial dinner. Between fifteen and thirty of its thirty-six courses can be meat dishes cooked overnight under the direction of a master chef known as a wousti waze. Guests are seated in groups of four, and the food is served on a big copper plate known as the "traen."
4. Kehwa is an unusual blend of Kashmiri green tea leaves, whole spices, almonds, and saffron that was historically cooked in a samovar, a metal kettle. The samovar features a central chamber where hot coal is filled, and the surrounding area is then used to boil water and other tea components.
5. *Hakim* (alternative transcription Hakeem) indicates a "wise man" or "physician", or in general, a practitioner of herbal medicine, especially of Unani and Islamic medicine.
6. *Fateh Kadal* is one of the seven bridges of Srinagar.
7. *Amira Kadal*: Of all the seven historical bridges of Srinagar, the Amira Kadal Bridge also referred to as the "first Bridge" is a relatively newer one if compared with the rest of the six bridges. Built in 1774–77 by the Afghan Governor Amir Khan Sher Javan, this bridge has been witness to many events of historical importance.
8. The Jhelum River is a river that flows from the Indian-administered territory of Jammu and Kashmir, through the Pakistani-administered territory of Azad Kashmir, and into Pakistani Punjab. It is the

westernmost of the five rivers of the Punjab region, and passes through the Kashmir Valley. It is a tributary of the Chenab River and has a total length of about 725 kilometres (450 mi).

9. Rouf is a traditional and rhythmic folk dance of Jammu and Kashmir. Amidst the rows of blossoming tulips, you will find women wearing colourful dresses rhythmically celebrating spring. The celebration is grand and includes this charismatic tradition.
10. Izband or Harmala in English and Harmal in Hindi popularly known as Wild Rue is a small shrub which is widespread in the subtropical regions of India, abundant in Kashmir and Ladakh. Harmala Seeds or Izband have been used since ancient times in the cultural and religious rites worldwide. According to folklore, Izband smoke wards off the evil eye. Traditionally Izband seeds are placed on red hot charcoal and in a Kangri, wherein they explode with a small popping noise releasing a fragrant smoke. This tradition is still followed in Kashmir and in some other parts of the world believing to ward off the evil eye. Izband is used on every special occasion in Kashmir, be it a wedding, a happy festive gathering or a housewarming party.
11. A karakul (or qaraqul) hat also called an Uzbek hat is a hat made from the fur of the Qaraqul breed of sheep. Karakul directly translates to black fur in the Uzbek language and the hat originally comes from Bukhara. The Karakul cap is colloquially known as a "Karakuli" in the Kashmir Valley. Although it is now associated with the Kashmiri gentry.

The Psychiatric Ward

Dr. Sohan Kaul
A Novel



Dr. Sohan Kaul is a well-known Kashmiri author and dramatist. He is the author of a dozen novels as well as a number of stage plays. One of his profound works is his latest novel "Psychiatric Ward". Aside from the shifting socio-political situation in Kashmir, the narrative illustrates the meaninglessness of life. His subsequent novels cover a variety of topics, but the fundamental issues regarding the universe, its existence and irrationality remain the same. "Talash Roze Jari" (Kashmiri), one of his major works, is an illustration of torturing impact of modern life and writer's seamless struggle to find an answer to basic questions regarding life and death. He is quite metaphorical in his prose and tends to reject the conventional pattern of Kashmiri novel. He has a notion that the basic difficulties of the modern damaged psyche include alienation, morality, disorientation, and uncertainty. His major focus as a writer is on damaged psyche of Kashmiri civil society. For his literary achievements and inventive idiom, he has won several awards. He is considered the pioneer in anchoring modern sensibility to Kashmiri Novel.



Mushihque B. Barg is an author of novels, translations, poetry, and short stories. Poetry Soup and Poem Hunter.Com both include his poetry collection. He teaches English literature and is a member of a number of literary organisations and forums. In 2007, Poetry.Com USA and the International Library of Poetry honoured the author with the "Editor's Choice Award" for excellent achievement in poetry. The author was honoured in 2017 for his poetry publications in *The Criticon: An International Journal in English* in February 2017 and September 2018. The author has translated well-known poets, fiction writers, and Kashmiri Sufi poets of Kashmir. For his translations and other literary works, the author received the Alamdar Award, the Kalidas Literary Award, and the Best Poet Award from the IIA.



AUTHORS PRESS
Publishers of Creative & Scholarly Books



ISBN 978-93-5529-367-1

₹ 295 | \$ 25